



Open Pathway

Quality Initiative Institutional Report Template

The enclosed Quality Initiative report represents the work that the institution has undertaken to fulfill the Improvement Process of the Open Pathway.

Signature of Institution's President or Chancellor

Date 8/31/15

Printed/Typed Name and Title

Diana M. Doyle, President

Name of Institution

Arapahoe Community College

City and State

Littleton, CO

The institution uses the template below to complete its Quality Initiative Report. The institution may include a report it has prepared for other purposes if it addresses many of the questions below and replaces portions of the narrative in the template. This template may be used both for reports on initiatives that have been completed and for initiatives that will continue and for which this report serves as a milestone of accomplishments thus far. The complete report should be no more than 6,000 words. Quality Initiative Reports are to be submitted between September 1 of Year 7 and August 31 of Year 9 of the Open Pathway cycle.

Date: August 25, 2015

Name of Institution: Arapahoe Community College

State: CO

Contact Person for Report: Donna Chrislip

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Answers to Report Categories are included as a separate Report following this Form

Report Categories

Overview of the Quality Initiative

1. **Provide a one-page executive summary that describes the Quality Initiative, summarizes what was accomplished, and explains any changes made to the initiative over the time period.**

Scope and Impact of the Initiative

2. **Explain in more detail what was accomplished in the Quality Initiative in relation to its purposes and goals. (If applicable, explain the initiative's hypotheses and findings.)**
3. **Evaluate the impact of the initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, student learning and success that are now in place in consequence of the initiative.**
4. **Explain any tools, data, or other information that resulted from the work of the initiative.**
5. **Describe the biggest challenges and opportunities encountered in implementing the initiative.**

Commitment to and Engagement in the Quality Initiative

6. **Describe the individuals and groups involved at stages throughout the initiative and their perceptions of its worth and impact.**
7. **Describe the most important points learned by those involved in the initiative.**

Resource Provision

8. **Explain the human, financial, physical, and technological resources that supported the initiative.**

Plans for the Future (Feature Milestones of a Continuing Initiative)

9. **Describe plans for ongoing work related to or as a result of the initiative.**
10. **Describe any practices or artifacts from the initiative that other institutions might find meaningful or useful and please indicate if you would be willing to share this information.**

Open Pathways
Quality Initiative Report
to
The Higher Learning Commission
a Commission of the
North Central Association

submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the 2016-17
Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Arapahoe Community College
Littleton, Colorado
August 31, 2015

OVERVIEW of the QUALITY INITIATIVE (Q.I.)

Executive Summary

Arapahoe Community College's (ACC) Quality Initiative (Q.I.) evolved from the findings and recommendations of the HLC 2006 Evaluation Team; in particular, that ACC engage in a thorough, cross-departmental assessment of institutional effectiveness and evaluate the cumulative effect of many departments on shared institutional purposes. ACC chose to participate in the Commission-facilitated Academy for Assessment of Student Learning to fulfill the Open Pathways Quality Initiative (Q.I.) requirement. ACC's Academy project was designed to "develop a comprehensive institutional assessment model that is cohesive, user-friendly and sustainable in order to generate continuous improvement." The comprehensive assessment model includes the assessment of institution-wide Learning Outcomes (general education competencies) within academic disciplines and the assessment of ACC's operational processes in relation to those same Outcomes.

Foundational strategies to design the Quality Initiative were based upon an existing well-designed, successful Instructional assessment model for assessing discipline outcomes. Patterning institution-wide assessment after the proven Instructional model was key to gaining faculty buy-in and the trust of staff in administrative and educational support units (AESUs). The most significant achievements resulting from ACC's Q.I. are: (1) embracing assessment for institutional improvement; (2) integrating Learning Outcomes College-wide; (3) implementing the assessment of processes in relation to College-wide Learning Outcomes; and (4) linking AESU assessment to process improvement and, therefore, student success.

Modifications to the initial Q.I./Assessment Academy project were based upon the observations and experiences of Instructional "assessment authors" and the AESU Core Assessment Team (aka assessment coaches), AESU assessment leads, and Assessment Academy mentors. ACC's institution-wide Learning Outcomes were originally entitled "Learning Outcomes for Student and Employee Enrichment." The title was changed to "Learning Outcomes for Student Enrichment and Process Improvement" to reflect the stated goal of AESU assessment. The Committee formed to address HLC recommendations (Institutional Effectiveness Committee) morphed into the Core Assessment Team (CAT) as a part of the Quality Initiative design.

ACC's Quality Initiative not only offered ACC personnel the opportunity to *discuss* assessment results annually as originally planned; it has grown to include celebrations and poster exhibits of assessment accomplishments. An Assessment Management System (AMS) was purchased to record all assessment plans/reports, plus to aggregate data for decision-making purposes. AMS training provides an opportunity to refine participants' knowledge of assessment language, analysis/presentation of data, and their understanding of the impact of assessment results on student/employee/organizational success. The Q.I. is a significant step toward continuous institutional improvement for ACC.

SCOPE and IMPACT of the INITIATIVE

Accomplishments in Relation to Purpose and Goals

Through ACC's 2008 – 2010 collaborative strategic planning process, five strategic directions were identified: Student Success, Communication, Technology, Partnerships and Sustainability. One of the *strategic goals* associated with the Student Success strategic direction was to “*integrate student Learning Outcomes into all programs/areas of the institution.*” As of January 2011, this strategic goal and the recommendation of the 2006 Evaluation Team that ACC integrate general education competencies, i.e. Learning Outcomes, College-wide, had not been taken to completion. The President, VP for Instruction, and Executive Director of Institutional Effectiveness met to lay out the timeline for accomplishing both of these immediate priorities.

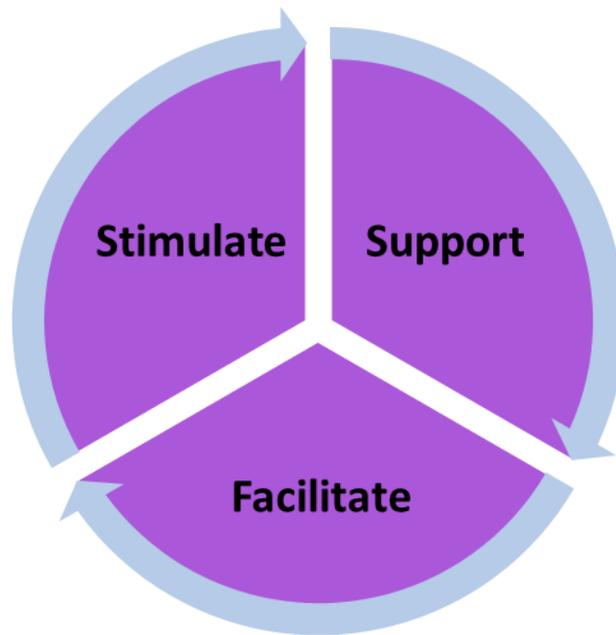
The acknowledgement that ACC was yet to “embrace a culture of assessment” for institutional improvement, coupled with the introduction of the Open Pathways accreditation model, drove the decision to join the HLC Assessment Academy in November 2011. The pursuit of the Assessment Academy project enabled ACC to address existing assessment concerns and provided the structure to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment model to generate continuous improvement. The objectives of the Academy project aligned with those of the Open Pathways Quality Initiative. Thus, the Academy project has served as ACC's Q.I. and expedited the implementation of ACC's new institutional effectiveness plan.

The focus of the 2011 spring semester was to bring Bob Mundhenk, HLC Visiting Scholar, to campus for an all-day blitz to assist College employees in learning more about implementing Learning Outcomes (LOs), College-wide. Bob's visit included a plenary session for all employees, two break-out sessions for faculty, two break-out sessions for non-instructional staff and a final meeting with ACC's Leadership Team. His feedback resulted in ACC revising/refining current LOs to incorporate a higher level of cognition and the paring down of ten LOs to a more manageable number. The Program Assessment Committee (Instruction) who initially proposed the LOs, together with other faculty, administrators and staff, met jointly in June 2011 to accomplish this task.

At the beginning of the fall 2011 semester, the revised institution-wide Learning Outcomes were introduced to employees: Information Management; Communication; Personal Development; Responsibility and Accountability; Quantitative Reasoning; and Cultural Awareness. ACC prepared to present what was a rather abstract concept for AESUs -- assessment of processes in relation to student learning and success – and the integration of LOs into curriculum across disciplines.

Employees were encouraged to consider their piece of the student learning pie; that is, how they envisioned their work in terms of stimulating, facilitating, and/or supporting student

success. This was the first step in the initiative that became the mantra for the Q.I., “We all have a piece of the Student Learning pie!” Senior leaders produced a video featuring



faculty and staff who addressed three questions directly related to the Information Management Learning Outcome:

- 1) How do you use Information Management in your work/processes?
- 2) How do you believe that your work stimulates/supports/facilitates student learning/success?
- 3) Do you assess the effectiveness of your efforts? If so, how?

The folks featured in the video, along with members of the Program Assessment Committee (PAC) and the yet-to-be-formed Core Assessment Team, became a part of the “critical mass” instrumental in embedding the value of institution-wide assessment of Learning Outcomes across the College. The link to the video is:

<http://campus.arapahoe.edu/portal/video/movin-on-up/movin-on-up.html>

Pursuit of both the Academy project and the Quality Initiative demanded consideration of ACC’s hypotheses regarding our philosophy of institutional effectiveness. The hypothesis for instruction is: “instruction contributes to student learning” and is measured via competencies exhibited in relation to institution-wide Learning Outcomes, as well as discipline outcomes. In terms of AESU processes, the hypothesis is that “process improvement facilitates unit and institutional effectiveness.” A two-step assessment is involved for AESUs: (1) the evaluation of unit process development with regard to specific Learning Outcomes and (2) the impact of resulting unit process improvement on institutional effectiveness -- direct measures (financial efficiencies, reduced legal liability,

increased productivity), as well as indirect results (student satisfaction surveys, retention rates, completion rates, etc.).

Upon return from initial Academy training, implementation of the new institutional effectiveness model began, in earnest. Embracing assessment for institutional improvement involves the embedding of LO concepts in instructional curricula as well as the embedding of those same concepts in the daily operations of the College. The PAC had instituted the measurement of two of the new LOs and two discipline outcomes as of the beginning of the fall 2011 semester. CAT members worked closely with assessment leads within each AESU who were identified by Leadership Team members with supervisory authority over their unit. Assessment coaches guided their assigned AESUs in the establishment of mission statements defining their role within the institution toward supporting ACC's institutional vision and mission.

Initially, AESUs were required to assess only one Learning Outcome in relation to desired process improvement. The emphasis for Instruction in 2011-12 was Information Management; thus, the Core Assessment Team prescribed the Information Management LO for assessment by AESUs. The goal was to measure the achievement of the Information Management LO at an institution-wide level. In an effort to establish baseline information for AESUs, they were also asked to identify their best practices relating to the Information Management LO for at least one work unit process and their current/proposed assessment measures and analysis for improving their process(es) in relation to that Outcome. Faculty were assisted by members of the PAC to implement program assessment in terms of Information Management.

In Year 2, faculty assessed Information Management and any one of the other five LOs. The Core Assessment Team prescribed the Information Management and Communication Learning Outcomes for AESUs to assess. By Year 3, AESUs had grasp the principles of AESU assessment and were given the leeway to assess at least one of the original Learning Outcomes prescribed for measurement, plus one of the remaining LOs. In Year 4, AESUs may choose any of the six Learning Outcomes for process assessment that will provide meaningful results in terms of their respective operational process. Faculty continue to have the flexibility to assess any two of the institution-wide LOs that are most appropriate to their subject areas, plus two discipline outcomes.

Just as the Instructional assessment model provided the overall framework for the assessment of AESUs, the process for designing assessment plans, collecting, analyzing and reporting assessment data, mirrored the steps in the Instructional assessment cycle. Templates for all phases of the assessment cycle had already been developed for Instructional assessment. Likewise, a feedback process for AESUs was designed and implemented by assessment coaches similar to that utilized by faculty for Instructional units. The only difference in the assessment process for AESUs and Instructional units is

that Instructional units are required to assess *both* institution-wide AND discipline-specific learning outcomes. AESUs are required to assess only institution-wide Learning Outcomes.

All goals related to the integration of ACC's Learning Outcomes institution-wide, as well as the assessment of AESU processes in relation to ACC's Learning Outcomes, have been achieved. ACC graduated from the HLC Assessment Academy on June 5, 2015.

Impact of the Initiative and Resulting Changes

ACC's Quality Initiative design quickly changed the process for gathering and reporting assessment data and using the results for improvement. During the first assessment cycle for AESUs (2011-2012), all information was manually recorded and submitted to the Institutional Effectiveness Committee (IEC) for review, analysis, and follow up for process improvement. At that time, faculty were also reporting their Instructional assessment results to the Program Assessment Committee who manually analyzed the data and provided feedback to assessment authors in the Instructional area. Their aggregated results were also submitted and presented to the IEC. The combined results were presented to ACC's Leadership Team as input to the institutional planning process and overall institutional effectiveness. A culture of assessment was beginning to evolve throughout the institution.

By the end of the 2011 fall semester, assessment coaches and the PAC were convinced that the volume of data resulting from institution-wide assessment could not be satisfactorily managed or aggregated to measure institution-wide achievement of Learning Outcomes. Further, the manual system did not provide timely results for informed decision-making to improve institutional effectiveness.

In January 2012, members of the Core Assessment Team and the Program Assessment Committee began reviewing web-based Assessment Management Systems (AMS). By July 2012, ACC's senior leadership had approved the purchase of the Tk20 AMS. An expressed need to draw connections between ACC's strategic plan and budgeting process directly influenced the system selected. Three Unit Administrators who were members of the Core Assessment Team participated in train-the-trainer courses in September 2012; the Core Assessment Team was trained in November 2012 and AESU assessment leads, in February/March of 2013. With the assistance of their assessment coaches, AESU assessment leads were able to enter their own assessment plans and results into Tk20 for the 2012-13 assessment period. Faculty were trained on the Tk20 AMS in fall 2013 and began entering their assessment results into the Tk20 System in spring 2014. Suggestions from users of the AMS and Assessment Academy mentors have assisted ACC's unit administrators in building a database in support of a user-friendly, cohesive, meaningful and sustainable assessment model.

Assessment results for *all* areas of the institution are available upon request to ACC's on-site Tk20 Unit Administrators. That access, together with the ability to produce reports

such as a meta-analysis of the “strength” of Learning Outcome achievement across the institution, has proven to be invaluable to College decision-makers. Additionally, it has further embedded the dual approach to institutional effectiveness at ACC. The requirement for AESUs to measure their processes in relation to at least two institution-wide LOs and for faculty to measure at least two LOs per year, plus the technology of the AMS and the ability to make data-driven decisions based upon assessment results are changes influenced by the Quality Initiative project.

Evaluation of the AESU assessment process by assessment leads and assessment coaches during the summer of 2012 revealed there was still confusion on the part of some AESUs (and their supervisors) as to the purpose of process assessment and how it tied to ACC’s strategic planning process, student learning and the operation of the campus, in general. Additional training of assessment leads, along with greater clarity in explanations by assessment coaches, resulted in a better understanding of the benefits of AESU assessment. Other concerns voiced via subsequent assessments of the process resulted in the original AESU assessment cycle being modified. The timeline now allows for a planning period that yields a more meaningful design and, therefore, more applicable results, plus better alignment with ACC’s planning and budgeting processes.

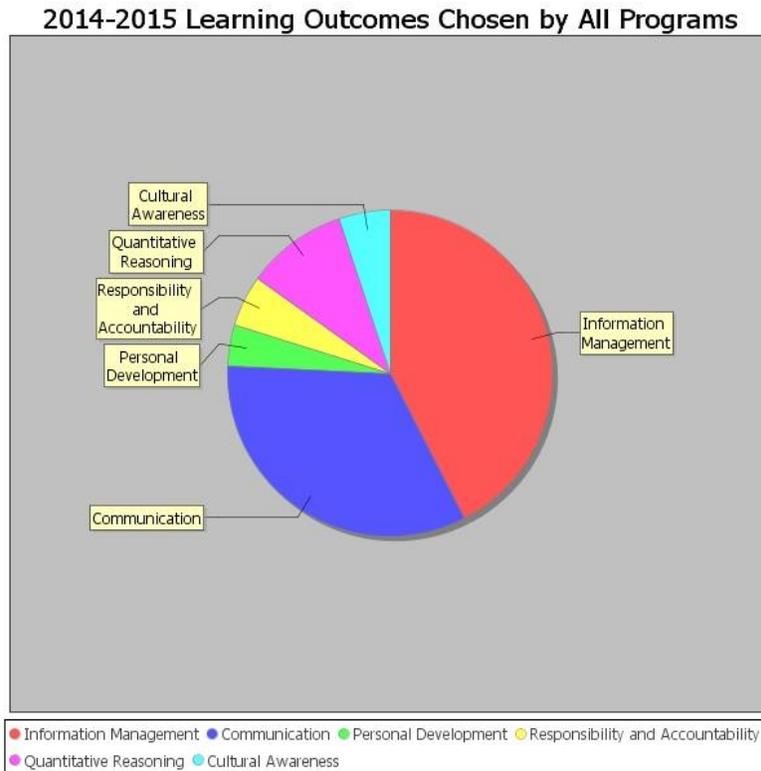
Direct benefits to students have also resulted from ACC’s Quality Initiative to move more methodically toward shared institutional purposes. Examples from Instructional assessment and AESU process assessment from the 2014-15 assessment period are summarized below:

Paralegal Program: Students are required to draft a legal memorandum (Communication LO) of law to demonstrate their understanding of the law and their ability to perform legal analysis (critical thinking), plus communicate the results of their analysis in a written format. The benchmark for the percentage of students to accomplish this assignment at the “Accomplished” or “Exemplary” level was 65%. The benchmark reflects the general percentages necessary for successfully working in a legal environment and is also based upon historical assessment. The benchmark was surpassed; faculty believe this to be the result of a new focus on research and writing for these students and will continue the emphasis based upon the assessment results.

Facilities AESU: Facilities tracked the time to completion of work orders filed. Facilities has invested in work order management software toward being more responsive to customer requests. The benchmark was to complete 80% of work order requests in 7 days or less. That benchmark was met. Work orders can be tracked by location and type of request. Management of this information (Information Management LO) facilitates and supports student learning in that electrical difficulties, water leaks, heating/ventilation problems, etc., impact not only what goes on in the classroom, but administrative and educational support units.

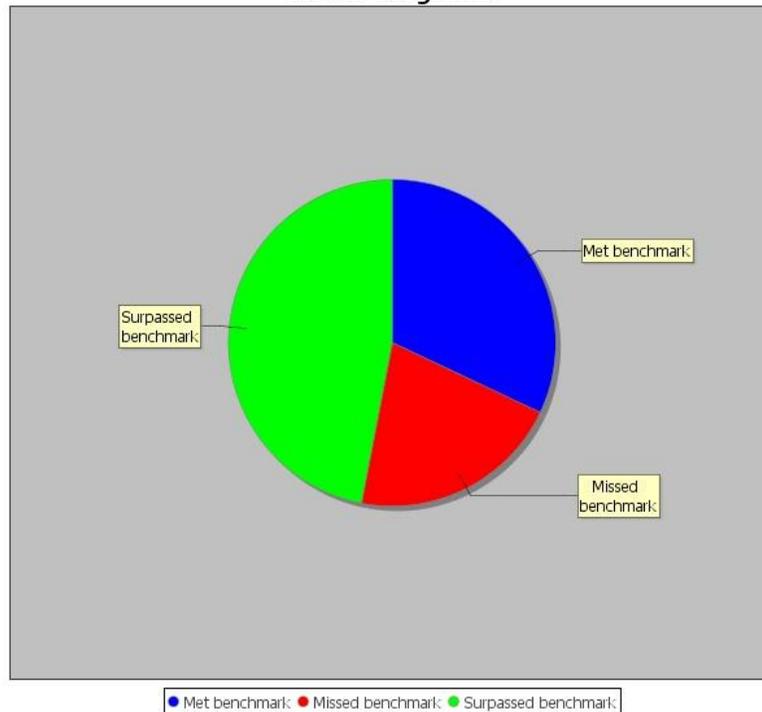
Tools, Data, Information Resulting from the Initiative

The Tk20 AMS has enabled ACC to manage assessment data and validate meaningful change. Tk20 produces reports that graphically display Learning Outcomes being assessed, institution-wide, as shown below. Results are also available by Instructional units, or AESUs, separately.



The strength of results in terms of meeting benchmarks is also available for the entire institution, or by Instructional units/AESUs, independently, as shown on the next page. During the 2014-15 assessment period, 79% of all areas of the institution met, or surpassed, their benchmarks regarding the achievement of institution-wide Learning Outcomes.

2014-2015 Strength of Results Across Learning Outcomes for All Programs



Prior to expanding ACC’s capacity to track assessment results and plans for improvement through the web-based AMS, there was no documentation available to tie plans for continuous improvement to Strategic Directions or Goals. Thus, institutional efforts to collaboratively move toward the achievement of a Strategic Plan were somewhat happenstance and not purposefully connected to the assessment of the ongoing operations of the institution. Implementation of an AMS and careful review of stored assessment results/plans for improvement contributed to the integration of Strategic Tasks and budget decisions in support of the future direction of the College. This is evidenced in ACC’s strategic planning process completed in spring 2015 and the resulting Strategic Plan available at <https://www.arapahoe.edu/about-acc/presidents-office/strategic-plan-2015-2020>.

The ability to produce assessment reports has prompted an Assessment Celebration each Spring Semester as a part of a College-wide event honoring the accomplishments of the academic year. A poster exhibit/competition has become increasingly popular, with first place awarded in three categories; namely, most informative, most attractive, and most creative use of materials in poster design. Sharing of assessment results between AESUs is held later in the summer and the poster winners announced at that time. The posters have also been used to welcome new and returning students to illustrate how all facets of the institution are “Moving Mountains” (ACC’s tag line) to help them succeed. In addition, posters are displayed at Student Orientation so that prospective students and their parents are aware of the efforts across the College to enhance the ACC experience.

Institutional capacity for assessing student learning has expanded far beyond the expectations ACC had upon entry to the Academy in November 2011. At present, ACC's AMS is only partially utilized for the assessment of student learning. The System is capable of conducting student evaluations; maintaining student portfolios; and connecting with D2L (ACC's Learning Management System) for direct evaluation of student work. The capacity for assessing institution-wide Learning Outcomes across the institution has increased 100%. ACC has also taken advantage of the opportunity to house our Strategic Plan in Tk20.

As ACC's yearly assessment cycle continues, the capacity for understanding the importance of assessing LOs institution-wide has also increased. Assessment of LOs in the classroom has encouraged the creation of learning experiences that incorporate general education/life skills in all instructional offerings. Assessment leads state process improvement plans either in terms of improvements to the unit processes that contribute to student learning, or improvements to the assessment methodology toward a more precise measure of the effectiveness or efficiency of those processes.

Considerable growth has been observed by assessment coaches in the assessment leads' comprehension of research methodology and the effective presentation of data. Both faculty and staff have acquired knowledge about differentiating direct and indirect measures, collecting appropriate sample sizes, employing longitudinal designs, incorporating the visual presentation of data, and ensuring validity and reliability in the research design. Each assessment cycle produces an evolution in assessment strategies, with data collection, analysis and presentation becoming more effective.

Challenges and Opportunities Presented by the Quality Initiative

***Challenges.* As noted previously, the assessment philosophy of ACC's senior leadership ("we all have a piece of the student learning pie"), together with the recommendations of the 2006 HLC Evaluation Team, initiated ACC's plan to integrate Learning Outcomes institution-wide. Research into a comprehensive institutional effectiveness model to include operational units yielded, for the most part, results pertaining to the assessment of student learning in the context of a classroom setting or the assessment of student learning in connection with co-curricular/student life activities. The contribution of other departments of higher education institutions (accounting, facilities, human resources, etc.) to student learning are much more implicit, rather than explicit, in nature and are typically not included in higher education assessment activities.**

The decision to join the Assessment Academy instilled hope within ACC leadership that other HLC institutions had adopted a similar philosophy to that of ACC regarding institutional effectiveness. The strategy for ACC's participation in the Assessment Academy was to combine ACC's philosophy with lessons learned/best practices of the network of Academy schools already involved. Unfortunately, there were no other

institutions involved at that time with the broader focus of assessing both student learning in the classroom and student learning/success through their experiences with administrative and educational support units. ACC tempered Nichols' and Nichols' "The Department Head's Guide to Assessment Implementation in Administrative and Educational Support Units," with our cultural and organizational environment. ACC leaders continued to build upon a vision of a comprehensive assessment model. The time provided at Academy sessions enabled the design of ACC's Academy Action Project and Open Pathways Quality Initiative.

Once the Q.I. was designed, faculty pursued the assessment of LOs with the same confidence and regularity as their assessment of discipline outcomes. However, there was a steeper learning curve for AESUs. That has been overcome by the opportunity to learn about, and have a voice in, the assessment process.

Normal challenges have been encountered in working with the web-based Tk20 System. Setup and implementation to the point of being able to launch the system for employee access was time-consuming and required intense focus/critical thinking on the part of Unit Administrators. It was imperative to shape the configuration and language of plans and assessment reports to align with what folks had been trained to recognize/use prior to the purchase of the System. In addition, the Tk20 System reports did not initially capture what ACC needed and/or were not in a format that was easily interpreted. This required that custom reports be designed and produced – also time consuming.

Finally, there is the ever-present challenge of noncompliance by both Instructional and operational units to align themselves with the assessment process. The most common response by these "assessment evaders" is that gathering, analyzing and synthesizing data is time-consuming and interferes with other work. It continues to be necessary to stress the importance of assessment so that the evaders understand how assessment contributes to student learning. Assessment coaches can only do so much to promote completion of the assessment activity. Supervisors also must be clear to employees regarding expectations for assessment.

***Opportunities.* The Q.I. adopted by ACC has presented an opportunity that had previously gone undetected. One of the most impressive and unexpected outcomes shared through the initial phases of the Initiative is the opportunity for Instructional units and AESUs to have a forum for reviewing their processes and sharing the information gleaned from their assessment efforts. A built-in element of pride has been exhibited in knowing what other parts of the institution are doing to improve teaching/operations that stimulate, support and facilitate our primary focus -- student success. In close connection is the opportunity to further embed within each employee their value to the institution and their ability to participate in, and contribute to, the assessment process at ACC. The Initiative has dispelled the narrow, Instruction-focused, view of assessment to the broader view of all**

employees' responsibility for assessment efforts to effectively achieve the mission of the institution.

The use of the Tk20 AMS has been invaluable to the gathering and archiving of assessment data, not to mention the ability for senior leadership to have ready access to critical assessment information for decision-making and reporting purposes. Reports are also available to each department for their review and action; departments are free to review the assessment plans and reports of other departments within the institution. Further, the System has the capability of storing assessment details that new employees can refer to in mapping out departmental processes that have been reviewed in the past, plus plans for improvement. This will contribute to the Succession Plan being crafted as a part of ACC's Strategic Vision 2015 -2020, i.e. ACC's strategic plan to be launched September 1, 2015.

ACC's leadership in the area of administrative and educational support unit assessment has provided numerous opportunities for Core Assessment Team and PAC members to share our model with other institutions. This includes presentations to HLC Annual Conference participants, Assessment Academy Exchange attendees, Assessment Academy Results Forum registrants, Tk20 Webinar production and related article, Colorado Community College System (CCCS) Student Life Administrators, the CCCS Assessment Conference, the Colorado Regional Assessment Council and numerous schools considering including operational units in their institutional assessment efforts.

COMMITMENT to and ENGAGEMENT in the QUALITY INITIATIVE

Groups/Individuals Involved, Perceptions of Worth and Impact, Important Points

Leadership Team. The Leadership Team consists of the President; Vice President for Instruction; Vice President of Administrative Services; Vice President of Student Affairs; the Chief Financial Officer; all Deans of the College; executive-level Directors of the College; ACC's Chief of Police; the chairs of the Classified and Administrative Assemblies; and the President of Faculty Senate. All departments of the College are represented by this group and every member of the Leadership Team is a supervisor over either an Instructional unit or an AESU. As such, Leadership Team members have been closely involved with the implementation of the Quality Initiative. Prior to expanding ACC's capacity to track assessment results and plans for improvement, there was no documentation available to tie plans for continuous improvement to Strategic Directions or Goals. Implementation of an AMS and careful review of stored assessment results/plans are invaluable for mapping out the strategic use of resources and the future direction of the College.

Program Assessment Committee/Instructional Assessment Authors. The Program Assessment Committee, comprised of an appointed faculty chair, two faculty representatives from each of the academic divisions and a representative from Institutional Research, provides objective oversight under the direction of the Vice President for Instruction. The PAC guides the instructional assessment process, working with assessment

authors for each department, reviewing instructional assessment plans, collecting and compiling instructional data and monitoring the revision of instructional processes for continuous improvement. Over the past four assessment cycles, the Information Management, Communication, and Quantitative Reasoning Learning Outcomes are those that have been assessed by the majority of faculty. The benchmarks set by faculty have been consistently surpassed, on average, 62% of the time. The Learning Outcomes have been determined by faculty and staff to be fundamental for preparing students for life success. One of the most important features of the technological resources enabled by the Q.I. project is the ability of the PAC to provide feedback to assessment authors regarding assessment plans design, reports and plans for improvement.

Core Assessment Team (aka Assessment Coaches). The Core Assessment Team is made up of the Vice President for Instruction, the Vice President for Administrative Services, one Instructional Dean, two faculty, two administrators, and one classified staff member. CAT members concur that the most valuable thing coming from the AESU assessment process is the collaboration among employees; the most important point learned is that institutional effectiveness is the responsibility of all staff members. In addition, the CAT is more confident in supporting recommended changes in processes based upon empirical evidence gathered by AESUs. Assessment coaches have provided valuable assistance to AESUs in communicating the purpose of process assessment in relation to institution-wide LOs. Additionally, they have assisted in educating assessment leads about the language of assessment; assessment plan design; assessment tools; reporting assessment results; and analysis of results to determine the need for process improvement. Coaching by CAT members and the Tk20 feedback loop contribute to the overall understanding of institutional improvement at ACC.

Assessment Leads/AESU employees. The assessment leads are the key contacts in AESUs for the assessment coaches. It is their responsibility to meet with their departments to collaboratively design their assessment plans, their methodology for gathering and recording data and for analyzing the results for process improvement, where necessary. Assessment leads and employees in their respective departments have been surveyed over the past three years to determine their perspectives about the value of AESU assessment, how the assessment process might be improved and if they believe their assessment project has been helpful to the operation of their respective departments. They note that process assessment in relation to ACC's Learning Outcomes "has been quite helpful as [it] helps drive what we need to improve and what students need to do to be successful." Comments also reflect confirmation that AESUs need to be "more focused and mindful" of how they serve students, faculty and staff. Paperwork must be managed, but not at the expense of providing individual assistance as much as possible when students request it. Assessment leads appreciate the general framework and guidelines provided by their coaches and the "latitude to create their own assessment [plans] under that framework."

In terms of improvement of the AESU assessment process, employees in AESU areas have requested more training relating to the construction of tables and graphs to display results, and entering data into Tk20. Knowing “the why’s and how’s of assessment [has] improved participation,” according to their comments. Assessment coaches have been asked to increase their contact with their AESUs. Additionally, AESU employees not serving in the role of assessment lead would like to be more involved to feel more “ownership” in assessment results.

Academy Mentors. ACC was fortunate to have two mentors throughout the Assessment Academy/Q.I. project. Bob Mundhenk, HLC Visiting Scholar, and Cia Verschelden, Executive Director for Institutional Assessment at the University of Central Oklahoma, provided valuable input. In his review of ACC’s Assessment Academy Impact Report, Dr. Mundhenk stated:

This project had a clear direction from the beginning and, though it remained steadily on that path till the end, the project evolved to become greater than initially anticipated . . . I think this is partly because of the commitment to seeing institutional effectiveness as the responsibility of every staff member and operational unit, and partly—perhaps more importantly—because of the continuous improvement orientation that informs every aspect of the project as it evolved.

Dr. Verschelden echoed Dr. Mundhenk’s positive comments and added:

One of the best outcomes of this project is that it seems the ACC employees are thinking about student learning and process improvement in concrete ways that have helped them to generate real evidence . . . My overall evaluation of this project over the last four years is that it could be a model of an ambitious start with flexibility for revisions, on the way, and a firm persistence to keep the thing going until it showed its own value . . . I think they could share some important lessons about making an assessment initiative stick.

Resource Provision – Human. The key to the achievement of ACC’s Q.I. goals is the support of ACC’s senior leadership. Secondly, the identification of a critical mass, in the form of the Program Assessment Committee, the Core Assessment Team, plus those who “bought in” to the idea in mid-2011 was crucial. ACC’s Leadership Team was overwhelmingly in favor of Core Assessment Team members, including the Chair of the PAC and a second faculty member, participating in all phases of the Assessment Academy. Instruction’s assessment authors and AESU assessment leads have the support of their respective supervisors in committing time and effort to assessment work.

Resource Provision – Financial. Not only has the philosophical commitment of senior leadership spurred the completion of the Q.I., the dedication of financial resources

has been equally important. This includes travel and lodging to Roundtables, the Academy Exchange at the HLC Annual Conference, and the Results Forum. Faculty participation on the Core Assessment Team and as reviewers of Instructional assessment plans/reports in their roles on the Program Assessment Committee has been funded via faculty release time and cash compensation. The purchase and implementation of an Assessment Management System, together with the training of three Unit Administrators (travel and lodging) regularly-scheduled conference calls with company representatives, and expanded professional development opportunities for Program Assessment Committee and Core Assessment Team members has enabled the success of the project. Expenses associated with annual celebrations of Instructional and AESU assessment have also been paid for by the College.

Resource Provision – Physical. The introduction of the Academy project/Q.I. and follow-up activities throughout project implementation have been held in ACC’s multi-purpose room. Training sessions for Unit Administrators and bi-weekly conferences have required the use of conference rooms over the course of the project. ACC has also enabled the training of assessment coaches, PAC members, assessment authors and leads and new employees via the use of computer labs throughout the College.

Resource Provision – Technological. As noted above, ACC invested in the Tk20 Assessment Management System early in the project. The provision of that technological resource enabled considerable strides in the accomplishment of the Academy/Q.I. project.

PLANS for the FUTURE

Related Ongoing Work

The first step toward sustainability of the Q.I. is the integration of the Program Assessment Committee and the Core Assessment Team. These groups have worked separately from each other over the past four years. However, some continuity exists; the Program Assessment Committee Chair has served on the Core Assessment Team and ACC’s Institutional Research Associate has served on both groups, as well. The combined group is referred to as the College Assessment Project.

As ACC leaders refine our institutional effectiveness model, factors certain to impact the assessment of student learning across higher education must be taken into consideration. The Association of American Colleges & Universities Liberal Education and America’s Promise Initiative; the Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile; and conversations in progress at the Colorado Community College System and the Colorado Department of Higher Education will likely incorporate many similar outcomes, but may require even more rigorous and relevant measurements. ACC’s Learning Outcomes will be adjusted accordingly, as will professional development regarding their assessment.

Internally, assessment results that inform strategic planning and implementation will be connected to program reviews, program development and new initiatives. Additionally, they will be integrated into budget requests for new programs and associated equipment.

ACC's Curriculum Committee will be retrained to ensure that Learning Outcomes are embedded in review and approval processes.

Compliance on the part of both Instructional units and AESUs to the assessment process will be more closely tracked through Tk20 and more heavily emphasized and rewarded. Plans are in progress to re-design the Institutional Effectiveness webpage to reflect the merging of the PAC and CAT, their combined mission, and strategies for accomplishing associated goals. The focus of celebration has, up to this point, been student achievement, the completion of assessment activities, and how results impacted continuous improvement. Assessment results will continue to inform improvement; however, student achievement will be the focus of celebration.

Knowledge of the purpose and workings of the institutional assessment process will be incorporated into ACC's new Department Chair Academy, as well as a required component of ACC's Master Teacher Certificate. An Assessment Manual is being created that will include an explanation of ACC's assessment language and assessment processes, assessment methodologies, expectations of assessment coaches/authors, guiding questions for assessment coaches/authors, design principles for assessing processes in relation to ACC's Learning Outcomes, and instructions for accessing and using Tk20.

Succession planning for ACC's Q.I. includes creating a process for informing new employees of ACC's assessment approach – classroom/process assessment – and the expectation of their contribution to overall student success. New assessment coaches/assessment authors will be trained by a mentor via service on the College Assessment Project one year prior to assuming responsibilities. Participating in the assessment process for the College will be included as part of every job description -- faculty *and* staff. ACC's three Vice Presidents will serve as the Steering Committee for the combined institutional assessment group. The ACC budget for assessment will incorporate a reward system for innovative applications of assessment results to improve institutional effectiveness.

Practices/Artifacts Available to Other Institutions

Arapahoe Community College is willing to share any practices/artifacts resulting from the Quality Initiative/Assessment Academy project that other institutions might find meaningful or useful.