

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Gogebic Community College

Project Details			
Title	Program Specific learning outcome assessment.	Status	COMPLETED
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated	12-18-2014
Timeline		Reviewed	04-06-2015
	Planned Project Kickoff 01-11-2014	Created	01-08-2014
	Actual Completion 09-15-2015	Version	1

1: PROJECT GOAL

A: The goal of this project is to develop a clearly articulated plan for linking student learning outcome assessment to course improvement strategy.

2: REASON FOR UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT

A: Our Systems Portfolio did an excellent job identifying the College's Six General Learning Outcomes as well as the learning objectives for each Division. However, the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report indicated that we need to clearly define how our learning outcomes are assessed and how these assessments are used to inform our course improvement efforts.

3: ORGANIZATIONAL AREAS AFFECTED

A: The Dean of Instruction, Division Chairs, and the Curriculum Committee are responsible for this project.

4: KEY ORGANIZATIONAL PROCESSES

A: Student learning outcome assessment.

5: PROJECT TIMEFRAME RATIONALE

A: This project requires at least three semesters to complete. Semester 1 - project development. Semester 2 - implementation. Semester 3 - assessment of progress/ evaluation.

6: PROJECT SUCCESS MONITORING

A: The committee will meet regularly to discuss progress.

7: PROJECT OUTCOME MEASURES

A: The project will be considered a success if:

1. Quantitative learning outcome measures are developed and clearly articulated.
2. We are able to link student learning outcomes with course improvement strategy.

Project Update

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: Project Status: In Progress
Original Project Start Date: January, 2014

Originally Projected End Date: May, 2015

Anticipated Completion Date: May 2015

After reviewing our current program specific learning outcomes and assessment practices, the Dean of Instruction met with Division Chairs to discuss how learning outcomes were established at the college and how they inform respective course improvements including curriculum development, class formatting and formal assessment of knowledge (competency) for respective classes.

Through this process with division chairs the following outcomes occurred:

1. Allied Health Division – Identified the need to revamp curriculum and integrate a concept-based approach aimed at improving student learning outcomes. This is also part of an accreditation process.
2. Math and Science Division – Concluded that division outcomes could align with Allied Health outcomes, namely regarding those courses required to be taken by pre-nursing students. In regard to other Math and Science curriculum, creating a student outcome map that clearly cites the core “STEM” competencies that students will achieve when fulfilling a degree from the division. This process is directly linked to course-level work from faculty.
3. Language and Arts – Confirmed that they are continuing to practice a before- and end- of course and program assessment of student learning outcomes. This activity involves all division faculty assessing and discussing student outcomes on a core essay required by all faculty teaching English 101. A similar practice occurs in our Accelerated Learning program and within our literature coursework. The faculty have concluded that this level of assessment provides insight and opportunity to easily identify areas at the course-level that should be revised. For example, if it is identified through the common assessment that students struggle collectively though the structure of an argument, faculty revisit the course objectives and approach to teaching this competency and consider changes.
4. Social Sciences – Currently faculty teaching psychology curriculum have developed a common student assessment that is continually updated based on assessment of student performance in classes. A unique opportunity emerging from the work in this division is the college considering a supplemental instruction model aimed as an early intervention activity to provide students with anticipated academic support in courses where the materials prove to present common concerns for students.
5. Applied Technology Division – Each of the programs in this division follow industry standards when it comes to learning outcomes assessment. For example, Automotive Technology follows the NATEF task-level competency measurement process; Welding follows a SENSE task-level process similar to Automotive where students must demonstrate mastery/competence on specific industry required “welds”; Construction Technology utilizes a competency-based approach to assessing student learning, and it is not uncommon for faculty in this program to link student progress or lack of progress to refocusing aspects of the curriculum or course-level activities.

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: The original project goal was to develop a clearly articulated process for demonstrating how the assessment of student learning outcomes are linked to course improvements. It is hoped that the development of this process will lead to more consistency in the tying together of assessment and course improvements.

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: During the past year, we have:

1. Developed and documented an Instructional Division-level process that ties together expected course outcomes with division-level competency expectations of students.
2. Strengthened the connection between Instructional Divisions by holding discussions to develop an understanding of how each division's curriculum and unique expectations for students are interconnected. This ultimately provides all faculty an opportunity to better see how their work with fellow faculty, albeit in different divisions, is related.

During the Spring 2015 semester we will evaluate the effectiveness of this process.

As a side note, our Strategy Forum Team has announced that they are undertaking a comprehensive review of our Institutional Learning Objectives and documenting how they are linked to divisional and course specific learning outcomes. This may require some modifications to the processes developed as a result of this project.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: The Dean of Instruction and the Instructional Division Chairs were primarily responsible for the development and implementation of this project. Together, they reviewed and updated the learning outcomes for each program. This work was done during the regularly scheduled Division Chair meetings. The Curriculum Committee will begin its work next semester by taking the lead in the assessment of

the overall project.

5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: Effective practices resulting from this Action Project include:

1. Transparency of student learning outcome assessment between divisions.
2. Dean of instruction having a stronger alignment with faculty work related to curriculum development, revision and in establishing competency-based assessment.
3. Data-driven decision making is now expected when it comes to course improvement efforts.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: The anticipated challenge to project success will be to keep the momentum established during the beginning of this project. The connection of assessment of outcomes and the continuous identification of course/ program improvement opportunities can be challenging, as at times, faculty and Division Chairs may be resistant to changing common/comfortable aspects of their curriculum.

7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

A: In addition to this Action Project remaining an agenda item on all Division Chair meeting agendas (providing an ongoing opportunity to discuss and seek improvements in the assessment of student learning as it relates to program improvement), we will now extend the responsibility for the evaluation of this project to the Curriculum Committee.

As noted in #3 above, our Strategy Forum Team is initiating a project which will link Institutional learning objectives to Program and Course level learning objectives. This new project may have a substantial impact on the future path of this project.

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: None at this time.

Update Review

1: CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY

A: This is a commendable and difficult project. Program learning outcomes and course learning outcomes, depending on the institution's taxonomy can be very different, so having a common dictionary will be important. As an example, mastery of the course outcomes for English 101 is not necessarily sufficient to meet a general education or program level outcome. That being said, since this seems to be focused on course level outcomes, having common assessments and requirements is critical.

2: ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: A fantastic project. Completion of this project will help Gogebic insure that all students are receiving similar content and learning experiences. Creating the system is important, but keeping it updated and relevant will require great leadership and communication. Having all faculty involved will be important for long-term success.

3: ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR

A: Tying this Action Project to an Action Project from a Strategy Forum is a great strategy. Gogebic has made great progress over the last year, and it is crucial that faculty, as a whole, understand how everything fits together within a student's education. It will also be important to be flexible, because as stated earlier, course level outcomes, institutional learning objectives, and divisional learning outcomes can all be very different.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Having the Dean of Instruction and the Division Chairs working together on this Action Project was a great strategy. Although top-down may seem to be the fastest strategy, this project will only work if faculty leadership are on-board and leading the charge. The Action Project, from the Strategy Forum, will also require faculty leadership.

5: EFFECTIVE PRACTICES

A: These are all great practices. Generally, faculty do not understand how their discipline fits into the curriculum as a whole. When faculty begin to understand how everything comes together, they can work across the curriculum as a whole, which creates a better learning environment for students. The Dean of Instruction being involved creates a bridge between all disciplines.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Faculty resistance is a good challenge to anticipate. The question becomes, what will the College do when it is encountered? The College may encounter it. Communication and focus on what is best for students is the key. Even then, there may still be resistance. At that point, the question becomes, will a few resistors be allowed to derail the entire project? Planning now for the future will help.

7: PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIME LINE

A: Curriculum Committee is a good home for this project. Communication will be key, because even though this can be assigned to them, if the committee as a whole is not on-board, implementation and progress may slow or stop. The new Action Project may have a substantial impact on this project, so it will be important to not duplicate or waste efforts. Completing this project, then having to "redo" it, could create even more resistance. Communicating about the new project early can help avoid future problems.

8: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

A: N/A

Project Outcome

1: REASON FOR COMPLETION

A: In the Spring of 2015 we began work on an Action Project "Institutional Learning Outcomes Update and Assessment Process". This project gained a great deal of support from all areas of the college and quickly expanded to include the linking of student learning outcomes for each course to the updated ILOs. A database was developed in order to track how student learning outcomes were being assessed. The entire faculty participated in the new Action Project whereas this action project was primarily the responsibility of the Deans and the Instructional Division Chairs. The new Action Project rendered this project obsolete.

2: SUCCESS FACTORS

A: This project began a conversation about how we could systematically collect student learning data and use that information to document and improve student learning. This project was the beginning of the Action Project which ultimately replaced it.

3: UNSUCCESSFUL FACTORS

A: While there was support for this project from the Administration and the Division Chairs, the goals and necessity of the project were not effectively communicated to the rest of the faculty. The replacement project on the other hand was well received by the faculty which is now actively involved in the assessment activities.