

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Des Moines Area Community College

Project Details	
Title Developing Linkage Data for Student Learning	Status REVIEWED
Category 8-Planning Continuous Improvement	Updated 09-13-2010
Timeline	Reviewed 09-29-2010
Planned Project Kickoff 07-01-2009	Created 11-24-2009
Target Completion 06-30-2010	Version 4 of 4

1: Project Goal

A: As a result of instituting a CAAP assessment of the general education competencies of reading and critical thinking across the six-campus in 2008/09 DMACC is moving forward to expand CAAP. The goal is to develop linkage data that can provide in-depth insight into student learning improvements from entry ACT/COMPASS scores to CAAP. In addition the initiative will establish benchmark data in the general education competencies of math and science.

2: Reasons For Project

A: DMACC has established benchmarks in the general education competencies of reading and critical thinking. It is important not to stop there but to expand and develop quantifiable benchmarks in the areas of math and science. This project will provide additional benchmark both nationally and in the college resources in the areas of math and science general education competencies. This project will also focus on developing linkage data to provide deeper insight into student learning improvements from initial ACT/COMPASS scores to current testing. The initial CAAP assessment was implemented in the fall term. It is the intent of this project to also to look at potential score variability by offering the assessment in the second semester as opposed to the first semester.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: The focus of this action project is to identify general education skills acquired by students at the college. Initially the college focused on the areas of liberal arts courses. The expansion of the project now crosses into the career/technical programs. As a result instruction across the college will be affected. Additional areas that will be affected are institutional research and planning; assessment; program and curriculum development; instructional methodology and faculty development.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: •Institutional research •Instructional methodology and delivery •Assessment •Faculty development

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: This is a limited time assessment initiative designed to explore the degree of student learning within the college. It is also designed to establish benchmarks for the general education competencies of 2nd year students in the areas of math and science. The implementation is projected to be completed by June 2010.

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: The anticipation is that this process will provide a solid basis from which the institutional data collection going forward will be able to be measured against. This action project is focused primarily in planning for continuous improvement and the data provided will expand both internal and national benchmark resources for monitoring

and improving student learning. The anticipation is that this process will provide a solid basis from which longitudinal data can be developed and internal student learning growth can be identified and monitored.

7: Project Outcome Measures

- A:** The success of this project will culminate in the ability for the college to achieve three goals:
- Establish relevant linkage data on student learning from ACT/COMPASS.
 - Establish relevant benchmark data on general education outcomes for mathematics.
 - Establish relevant benchmark data on general education outcomes for science.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

- A:** DMACC expanded on the CAAP general education competencies by initiating a math and science assessment. Differing from the previous CAAP initiative the assessment was moved from a fall implementation to a spring implementation to assess potential differences in academic calendar timing for the CAAP assessment. The same protocols that were used in launching the reading and critical thinking CAAP assessments in 2009 were used when introducing the assessment to the Deans & Provosts followed by the District Chairs. Again, preparatory data was culled to target second year students by identifying courses where the average total credit accumulation was 30+ credits. District Chairs were solicited to volunteer courses in the summer of 2009 providing faculty with ample time for notification as to their participation and allow for planning to build the assessment date into their spring semester syllabi. A total of 15 courses with 1399 enrollments were identified. A total of 734 actual assessments were completed during the week of April 5-9, 2010. This 2nd implementation of CAAP provided benchmark data on general education in the areas of reading, critical thinking, math and science. This year DMACC also pulled ACT and COMPASS scores on all assessed students to gain linkage data for student growth in the general education competencies assessed by CAAP. Data has been collected and processed. The Action Project is complete.

2: Institution Involvement

- A:** The Office of Institutional Research involved Deans & Provosts, District Chairs, and faculty in this project. The framework for the initiative was created and presented to the Deans & Provosts for input and support. The District Chairs were solicited for volunteering courses and working with the key faculty members who were teaching the courses. Administrative staff on each of the campuses and disciplines was key support in securing, disbursing, and collecting the test materials during the week of the assessment. Participating Faculty were supportive in building the necessary time into their course schedules, implementing the assessments and monitoring, securing and returning the test materials.

3: Next Steps

- A:** This Action Project was successful and is being retired.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

- A:** DMACC has now established benchmark data and as a result has implemented a repeating schedule of CAAP assessment that will cycle every two years in the four general education areas to monitor student learning both internally and externally. The data will be used to identify trends and needs.

5: Project Challenges

- A:** There are no challenges noted at this time.

Update Review

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: Completion of a project of this magnitude is no easy task, and you should be proud of your accomplishment! The focus, collaboration, and involvement of all of the leadership demonstrate that you are a high performing organization. Not only did this project prove your desire to plan for continuous improvement (AQIP Category 8), it also helped students learn (Category 1), measured your effectiveness (Category 7), and supported institutional operations (Category 6).

Building on prior successes (using 2009 protocols) was a good way to maintain consistency throughout the project, and your specific methodology helped to prove your successful completion. This update is clear, concise, and complete showing how you achieved an exceptional accomplishment through this project. Congratulations! Enjoy the next phase of your journey toward continuous quality improvement!

2: Institution Involvement

A: Such pervasive collaboration between, and among all levels of faculty and administration is rare. This involvement proves that DMACC leads and communicates (AQIP Category 5) and values people (Category 4). As many institutions struggle with the relationship between faculty and administration, it may be advantageous for the other institutions in the Higher Learning Commission to hear how you were able to work together in this situation. I would encourage you to consider putting together a presentation for the next Annual Meeting in 2011!

3: Next Steps

A: Success is not always certain, nor can it be expected. When an institution espouses as many of the principles of high performance organizations as you have, the probability of success becomes infinitely greater. Congratulations on your success, but make sure to continue to strive toward quality improvement.

4: Resulting Effective Practices

A: The resultant data should assist you in helping students learn (AQIP Category 1) and in understanding students' and other stakeholders' needs (Category 3). Make sure to take the benchmark data and produce trend lines for that data to move the benchmarks (either up or down) depending on the cycle of student ability. It may not need to be stated, but it will be important to not only identify trends and needs, but to document those trends and needs to show improvement over a period of time.

5: Project Challenges

A: Though there are no current challenges (nor any identified challenges toward the retirement of this project), there may be issues that come up in the future—methodological changes in ACT/COMPASS/CAAP, splits in the relationship between faculty and administration, or changes in the definition of general education. Make sure to work on agility and foresight to round out your principles of high performance organizations.

Again, congratulations on accomplishing your goals for this project, and good luck as you work toward identifying and planning your next project! Remember to celebrate your success!