

- 1. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.** (Describe concrete achievements: meetings, data gathered and analyzed, plans made or implemented, changes in processes, and measured results. If you haven't made much progress, explain why you think things are moving slower than planned.)

Assessing student learning has rated in 1998 during the last self-study as a to priority. The A-Team, a faculty led committee, worked to support faculty in collecting and documenting evidence of student learning. As the college prepared for the Vital Focus in the fall of 2004 data from the A-Team indicated only 17 percent of faculty were submitting evidence of formative assessment practices to the A-Team.

A revised committee structure took on the conundrum of assessment beginning in the spring of 2005 as a result of the Vital Focus, which once again indicated that assessment of student learning beyond course grades continued to be a weakness. A thirteen member committee comprised of nine faculty and four staff co-chaired by a faculty member and the vice president of instruction guided the development of a series of workshops held throughout the spring and fall terms of 2005 to assist faculty in completing the ABC's of Assessment at the course level. At the behest of the vice president of instruction, faculty were asked by their deans to devote one of their teaching effectiveness goals from their evaluation plan to assessment. The ABC's of Assessment were defined as;

Align – What are the learning objectives of this course?

Bridge – What are appropriate teaching and learning activities that will help students meet the course objectives?

Collect – What information can I obtain from students to determine if they have met the objectives?

The vice president worked with the deans to initiate the development of an intranet archive using Microsoft's Share Point to record the artifacts created by the faculty in aligning course objectives, bridging the objectives with formative assessment strategies, and collecting the evidence of student learning. Beginning in the spring of 2006 the ABC's were expanded to include Documentation and Evaluation. Faculty reflected on the data collected from the assessment strategies employed to provide evidence of student learning. Faculty are continuing to pursue modifications in their classrooms in response to trends and patterns that emerged from the assessment data. Deans prepare summary reports for the vice president. In the fall of 2006 faculty participation in the assessment of student learning had risen to 95 percent.

2. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this action project.

(AQIP wants information about motivation and communication: how you kept this project on the institution's priority list, how you maintained general awareness of the importance and progress of the project, and how you kept those working on it directly active and motivated.)

RRCC has had several instructional assessment initiatives over the last decade. Consistently some faculty have embraced the need for documenting and evaluating their assessment measures, and others have struggled with documenting what they do in the classroom. To fully infuse assessment into the culture, RRCC needed a greater commitment from administration and a greater motivator for the faculty. Student completion numbers, final grades, certification exam pass rates, and job placement data does not provide insights into the students that fail or drop out well before the summative exams are administered. A formative strategy was needed to identify students' issues with course content while there was still time to remediate the problems.

The Vital Focus held in the fall 2004 created a new synergy of engagement. The Assessment of Student Learning Committee was formed of volunteers from among faculty and staff. The Committee's first order of business was to change the perception of assessment! Assessment lacked a consistent definition. Some faculty were ambivalent about what they initially viewed as unnecessary steps of checking student learning and documenting and analyzing student performance in addition to grading student work. The committee initially focused their charge to course assessment. The ABC's of Assessment guided a systemic process of professional development and the definition of consistent faculty expectations. While the ABC's were looked upon by some as too prescriptive, the ABC's created a broader understanding of the PLAN, DO, CHECK, ACT Cycle. This cycle has continued to guide the collection and analysis of data relative to student learning as assessment has moved beyond the course level in several departments.

3. Describe your planned next steps for this action project.

(Be specific about the next critical steps you are planning to move the action project ahead. If your planning is vague or there is no planning at this point, explain why.)

Assessment continues to be viewed primarily as a function of instruction. While other areas of the college certainly engage in evaluation processes and quality improvement efforts there is not a consistent definition of assessment across the other areas of the college. Data analysis has not been used consistently to benchmark the impact of quality improvement efforts relative to improved student outcomes.

The president of RRCC, and the vice presidents of Instruction and Student Services lead a team of eight staff, including three faculty, to the Assessment Workshop in Lisle, Illinois, July 25-27, 2007. The team developed several “Breakthrough Strategies.” Primary among these was the development of a mission focused institutional wide initiative that would engage all areas of the college in self evaluation. The initiative will begin with one to two areas each year until all functional areas have completed the evaluation process. The self-evaluation will help to systematize the episodic efforts of process improvement occurring at the department level. Involvement of the Institutional Research Office will provide quantitative data to benchmark and document the quality improvement efforts across the college. As the data is collected and analyzed opportunities for intra-department collaboration is expected to continue to flourish beyond the pockets of coordination that currently exist.

It has been almost three years since our Vital Focus and the prioritizing of the Action Projects which includes the Assessment of Student Learning. The vice president of Instruction will be working with the faculty and staff leaders of the Action Projects to conduct the “Year of Evaluation.” Teams will be formed from staff and faculty that have not been directly involved in the action projects to conduct an evaluation of the outcomes of the activities completed by each action project. The teams will make recommendations based on their review of how or if the action projects should be retired and integrated as standard operating procedures.

4. Describe any effective practices that resulted from your work on this action project.

(Share practices—or processes, policies, procedures, or initiatives—that could be adopted or adapted to other institutions. AQIP is most interested in practices that would give value—better educational services, cost-savings, improved morale, more satisfied stakeholders, etc.—to another institution if it copied your innovation. If you believe that your work on this project has little or no value for other institutions, explain why.)

As faculty participation in assessment increased, the vice president encouraged the deans to work with faculty to be creative in defining assessment goals. There was no longer a need to require faculty to follow the prescribed ABC’s template. The ABC’s of Assessment, while bemoaned by some as extra work, created a foundational process that faculty have continued to build from as they develop broader assessment strategies that examine the learning outcomes of their courses in preparing students for subsequent course work in and across disciplines.

The Assessment Committee supported by the Office of the Vice President of Instruction initiated a collegial sharing of the Best Practices of Assessment.

Faculty conducted workshops for their peers sharing effective classroom assessment strategies such as portfolios, peer and self-assessment, rubrics, oral presentations, and team and group assessments. The faculty newsletter, Teaching on the Rocks, produced each semester features a best practices corner highlighting assessment strategies used by faculty and how the strategies are being applied to continuous improvement in teaching and learning in the classroom.

Disciplines are tracking student progress in the course sequence to evaluate the effectiveness of lower level curricula to prepare students for advanced study. Examples include the development of tools to measure mathematic readiness for chemistry courses which help students to make informed decisions about their readiness for advanced science courses. A common final is being developed by the mathematics department with the goal of creating consistent student outcomes for courses with multiple sections. These efforts have helped to identify the specific course objectives that are highly correlated with successful student performance in higher level courses in the discipline and or degree sequence.

Faculty have teamed across disciplines to develop promising qualitative assessment strategies. Faculty visits each others' classes to provide feedback as part of a collegial exchange. Efforts will continue into the next year to expand the intra-department sharing of how faculty are using assessment data analysis to modify instructional practices and improve student outcomes.

5. What challenges, if any, are you still facing with regard to this action project?

(This is an opportunity to obtain constructive, actionable feedback and advice from AQIP's review process. Use this question to specify where your blocks, gaps, sticking points, or problems are. If you already have fashioned strategies to deal with any challenge you face, share both the challenge and your strategy for meeting it.)

Supporting faculty effectively throughout the assessment cycle requires a systematic process of professional development, documentation and coordination and dissemination of the efforts occurring at the course and program levels throughout instruction. RRCC has created the Academic Center for Excellence. This faculty led initiative will have a role in developing a continuum of resources as faculty engage at all levels in the use of data driven decision making relative to improving student performance.

For the past two years as part of the Assessment of Student Learning Action Project faculty have engaged in a wide array of assessment strategies to evaluate the learning outcomes of their students relative to course competencies. These efforts have occurred at the individual faculty level and are reported to instructional deans as part of faculties' year end performance reviews. Efforts to share this information across departments were initially led by the Assessment

Committee. As Assessment of Student Learning has transitioned to the responsibility of the vice president of instruction and the instructional deans, a forum is needed to build upon the collegial exchange initiated by the Assessment Committee. The forum will focus on how the data collected from student performance is used to modify instructional practices, and collect and analyze data to measure the impact of the modifications to improving student outcomes.

As assessment of student learning expands beyond the course level, instructional areas of the college have begun intra-departmental conversations concerning the identification of completer competencies. The Colorado Department of Higher Education has broadly defined core learning competencies for completers. These competencies can be paraphrased as students' ability to speak, write, read, think, feel, and do. As these competencies are further defined by faculty for RRCC students, efforts to measure student's performance in the competencies across disciplines prior to graduation will take the Assessment of Student Learning Action Project well into 2008 and beyond.