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## Action Project

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**Title:** Assessment of Student Learning

**Version:** 2

**Institution:** Red Rocks Community College

**Status:** Completed

**Submitted:** 2009-11-24

**Category:** 8-Planning Continuous Improvement

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### Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2005-01-01

Target completion date: 2005-01-01

Actual completion date:

### Project Detail

#### Project Goal

Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer

Embed throughout the instructional processes the continual improvement practice of setting clear learning and/or program expectations, systematically gathering, analyzing and interpreting evidence to determine how well performance is matching the expectations, and documenting the evidence as important information that will be used in planning subsequent program and or teaching modifications. The strategies associated with the classroom assessment goal are formative. They are designed to give students early feedback on progress, and help faculty formalize the process of deliberately reflecting on student performance. The formative strategies create tangible evidence that can guide instructional adjustments specific to improving student learning.

#### Reasons For Project

Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities

The Vital Focus' Constellation Survey and Conversation Day (10/2004) identified the need to improve the process of data driven decision making to achieve the measurable outcomes of student retention and student completion/graduation. The Assessment Committee was formed to prioritize goals and design the implementation strategies. Assessment has been a continual challenge for us. We are constantly engaged in assessment activities as we intuitively react to student's needs. However our intuitive approach does not maximize the collective power we have as good teachers to build a culture of continual quality improvement. Formalizing the process of assessment will require faculty designed implementation with administration support and management. Our president has explicitly stated that instituting a strong assessment plan across instruction is a top priority.

#### Organizational Areas Affected

List the organizational areas -- institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project

Instructional Services will implement the action project. Instruction Services is comprised of the vice president of instruction who will assume the role of Key Leader, the deans of instruction will assist in the monitoring, review and documentation of the assessment practices and the faculty will be responsible for developing assessment strategies aligned with course learning objectives.

#### Key Organizational Process(es)

Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve

Red Rocks Community College has a strong reputation among our stakeholders for excellence in teaching and the learning of our students. Other than summative evidence of tests, certification exams, and course grades we do not have consistent documentation of teaching practices that produce students prepared for

transfer and workforce success. Without this evidence we are not as effective as we could be in planning and implementing improved teaching strategies.

### **Project Time Frame Rationale**

Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion)

Formative assessment practices are a required goal in faculty performance plans. Faculty have been engaged in aligning their course learning objectives with their teaching practices as a precursor to developing assessment strategies that measure the effectiveness of the teaching practices in helping students master the course competencies. Faculty have been engaged in closing the loop of assessment; they have developed assessment strategies, collected data on student performance, reviewed the data and reflected on possible alterations to their course/and or teaching practices to improve student performance. As a result of this initial work and the plans for continued professional development, a year long review of the formative assessment practices occurring at the classroom level beginning in the fall of 2006 is expected to produce data that can be used by faculty in their continuous quality improvement efforts at the course level. Faculty will have the opportunity to measure course alterations planned from the initial assessment review conducted in the spring of 2006 to determine if student performance is impacted.

### **Project Success Monitoring**

Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing

Faculty will declare their assessment plans as part of their goal setting at the beginning of each term. Deans will follow up with faculty using the Assessment Loop Cycle to gather a summary of the assessment activities. The summaries will be posted to the Red Rocks Community College AQIP site as evidence of our quality journey.

### **Project Outcome Measures**

Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals

The initial implementation phase of assessment is focused on instructional processes. Our long range goal is to model across the institution the cycle of gathering performance data and measuring performance against clearly stated expectations. Public institutions of higher education in Colorado are required to document and show increased measures of student success defined as access, retention and completion. To achieve these objectives mandated as part of the state funding we receive, our teaching and learning and student support services must be seamlessly connected with the shared commitment to quality evidenced by the effective use of assessment's iterative cycle for program improvement.

## **Annual Update**

### **Project Accomplishments and Status**

Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project

Since the last update fall, 2007, faculty members have continued to develop assessment goals as part of the annual performance planning. Eighty-seven percent of full time faculty successfully completed the assessment cycle. Student learning assessment has primarily focused in the classroom in the first stages of the Assessment Action Project. Assessment goal planning is completed by each faculty member in consult with his or her dean during the fall semester. Faculty members are encouraged to address each step of the assessment cycle in implanting his or her assessment goal. The phases of defining a learning objective based on the established course competencies, aligning the learning objective with his or her teaching strategies, developing a measurement tool with which to collect data for analysis, which may result in the development of alternative teaching practices to improve student outcomes. Faculty members submit documentation of the assessment process used, data analysis, and action taken as a result of the analysis to his or her division dean as part of the year end evaluation at the conclusion of the spring term. Division deans provide summary reports from each area to the vice president of Instruction, which are then posted to the college's intranet, Share Point.

### **Institution Involvement**

Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project

In an effort to gain an objective perspective of the effectiveness of the action projects, task forces were formed fall, 2007 from faculty and staff that had no previous involvement with the development or

implementation of the projects. The make up of the task forces were intentionally designed to include staff from outside of instruction. The task force assigned to review the Assessment of Student Learning surveyed 25 faculty members as part of their review to gather representative responses specific to the progress of the Action Project. The responses from the faculty were used to help the task force in the development of their recommendations, which are more fully discussed in the next sections.

## Next Steps

Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project

Findings of the task force charged with conducting an evaluation of the Assessment of Student Learning project made several recommendations for improvement. These include making assessment information and results widely and easily available and taking a larger view of instructional and institutional assessment. The committee felt that in general, course and program assessment was effective in achieving the primary objective of increasing the participation of faculty members in conducting formative assessment of student learning and using the results to continually improve his or her teaching practices. The vice president of Instruction has offered a full semester release to a faculty member, to begin fall 2008, to conduct assessment research. Currently under discussion among instructional leadership are the goals of the research. Three areas of focus are expected to form the final research design: 1) Conduct an in-depth analysis of the delivery and outcomes of developmental education. 2) Design and populate a web presence to showcase best practices in documenting teaching and student learning excellence. The dissemination of best practice should explore multiple modalities to ensure broad sharing and awareness of teaching and learning strategies occurring throughout the college. 3) Conduct student and staff surveys and focus groups to document the “student experience” in the classroom as well as the multiple processes encountered by students in the admission, advising, registration, placement testing, and enrollment functions. As a result of the data gathering define benchmarking strategies that can be used to prioritize continuous quality improvement throughout the institution. Newly hired faculty will include in their goals and objectives an initial course assessment that measures the alignment of course objectives outlined in the curriculum guide with their assessment strategies. Providing professional development to new faculty in the development of student learning assessment goals will be a function of the faculty-initiated Achieve Classroom Excellence Center (ACE). ACE will expand professional development offerings to include training sessions as well as pairing of new faculty with veteran faculty.

## Resulting Effective Practices

Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project

Red Rocks Community College conducted a presidential search fall, 2007 resulting in the successful hiring of Dr. Michele Haney as the new president January, 2008. As part of the search, the vice president of Instruction worked with the deans and department chairs to publish “Our Commitment to Instructional Excellence.” Because of the archiving of the assessment strategies occurring across the instructional departments that included specific results of student learning, the document was successfully developed and published in less than 10 days. The document showcased every department of the college with specific evidence of student success. The candidates each commented on the value of the document in telling the story of Red Rocks as an institution committed to continuous quality improvement in teaching and student learning. As part of the plans for dissemination this document will be updated regularly to communicate to all stakeholders the result of the College’s practices in teaching and learning.

## Project Challenges

What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project

While significant progress has been made toward embedding the iterative cycle of quality improvement in the classroom, ambivalence toward additional assessment requirements continues among some faculty. Addressing this concern is part of the rationale for the faculty release to develop the best practices in student learning dissemination modalities (see # 3). 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. Non-instructional areas have begun to collect data concerning service delivery. As part of the faculty release, the non-instructional areas will receive assistance in analyzing the

data and developing benchmarks for use in prioritizing quality improvement efforts.

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