

## Assessment of Student Learning: Engaging in Continuous Improvement

Response - Version 2 2016-03-14

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

**Primary Mentor:**

Kirstan Neukam

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**HLC Scholar:**

Jan Smith

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Please know that I am delighted to be able to work with you as your HLC Scholar and look forward to following your project and providing support as you progress through the Academy.

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

Reviewed by **Kirstan Neukam** (Primary Mentor)

It appears that Barton Count Community College (BCCC) has learned some very important lessons based on the experiences of other schools in the academy (e.g., “Do not tackle to much at once, Pilot first, keep focus on student learning, curricular mapping is a must,” etc.) This is very noteworthy given it will help them avoid the common pitfalls experienced by other schools. Great job! Barton also come to some very important realizations regarding the various software packages they are implementing. By understanding that software if merely a tool and the focus should be on how it will aid/support the assessment process is important. Too many times schools modify their outcomes and processes to fit the technology vs find solutions that will work for what you want to accomplish. This is a wonderful insight you made early in the process and should save you a tremendous amount of wasted time. I also love how you are wanting to focus on usefulness of the data to the faculty vs creating a reporting system alone.

Some other important accomplishments to mention is your team attending the all-faculty meetings regularly to keep communication open. During these meeting you are able to clarify assessment vocabulary, answer questions about the purpose and scope of project, and allowed them to share their success stories. Keeping communication and dialog open across

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campus is very important and it appears that Barton is making significant efforts to accomplish this task.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

I strongly agree with Kirstan's observations. I especially commend you on the valuable lessons learned from reading other postings in the Collaboration Network. This could save you considerable time and grief from having to learn the lessons through your own experiences. An additional strength is your willingness to make good use of mentor feedback, which will also serve you well as you progress through your Academy experience. I particularly commend you for making use of pilot projects before tackling things on a larger scale as this gives you the opportunity to refine procedures.

**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**

Reviewed by **Kirstan Neukam** (Primary Mentor)

From your posting, it appears that you are tackling three main projects at is point: Institutional outcomes (the initial project scope), co-curricular assessment, and also program outcomes/review. Am I correct? I understand the desire to keep the project moving forward and growing; however, don't forget the wise advice of "do not tackle too much at once."

i would strongly suggest that you defer the connection to co-curricular assessment until you have a clear answer to the following question: What exactly are you trying to measure when you say "co-curricular assessment?" To help clarify my question, let me first mention the following insight. Often times when the academic side of an institution begins holding conversations with the student services side of the institution, they are often surprised to learn that they often have their own assessment processes which have been in place for years. This is typical run under the Institutional Research division or Strategic Planning division of the institution to measure institutional effectiveness. Thus, with regard to your question of how to use their assessments without changing their processes you have to ask yourself how it fits within the structures of your institutional goals/outcomes. Are you trying to assess institutional outcomes that cannot be assessed in a classroom in other areas of the institution (e.g., healthy living, volunteerism/community service)? Or are you trying to assess outcomes such as writing in both the academic and student service side of the house? Depending upon the strategy, you will approach it differently. Once you have determined which way you wish to proceed, I will be happy to discuss the various ways you can get it implemented. One approach is just working with the student service side to collect the information but can be done very similar to how you do it now, whereas the other approach requires you to collect additional student identification data to run the analyses for comparison (e.g., those who use the service vs those who don't).

**What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?**

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

I concur with Kirstan's comments. I appreciate your detailed update regarding changes to your plan and description of how you incorporated mentor feedback. What is less clear to me is what you hope to accomplish in the next six months. You mention that you will continue to expand use of Microsoft Access and that you have already piloted the new interface. You also mention that you will pilot an Access database for institutional assessment. How will you incorporate some of your lessons learned from the Collaboration Network in your work over the next six months, most notably, how will you keep the focus on student learning and how will ensure that your work is faculty-driven? If you would like to provide more detail regarding your upcoming plans in your next update, we would be glad to provide more specific feedback for you to consider.

**What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?**

Reviewed by **Kirstan Neukam** (Primary Mentor)

In your posing, you mentioned that you forgot to document the conversations you had with the faculty at the all faculty meeting. Have you thought about going back to ask the faculty to provide you with their success stories that they discussed so you can have the documentation. More importantly, given this oversight it might allow your team to think about a way to implement this type of reporting into your existing system. I know that you have created an Access program to collect the numerical assessment data; however, have you thought about creating a reporting template that faculty could then use when they are using the data collected to make the changes in their courses/programs. For example, fall 2015 data is released to the faculty. Your hopes it that the faculty take that information to made improvements in their course/program. Then in fall 2016 they could see if the changes they implemented had an effect on the student outcomes. Why not create a form that list results from one term, faculty can report changes they implements, and they report the results of following term to see if there were any improvements? This could easily be done with a one page template available on the assessment/IR website for faculty to use at their discretion. I think it is very important for your team to find a way to document the actual improvements in learning that is occurring based on the new data reporting/collection process that is more tangible to what faculty actually do vs just a bar graph showing increases/decreases in scores.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

Again, Kristan makes some good points. On a more general level, as I read your update, the question I kept coming back to is "Where is your focus on improvement of student learning?" You have some great goals and your communication goal includes the observation that "the goal is to have instructors using the data, not just a pretty package." I

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strongly commend you for taking the time to establish an effective infrastructure as this will be critical to the success of your project. However, as you develop infrastructure and work toward accomplishing your three identified goals, I think it will be critical to keep in mind your ultimate goal of improving student learning. I encourage you to keep this at the forefront of your conversations, otherwise you may end up with great processes for collecting data and then find yourself unsure of how to use it. Be very deliberate about building in ways to use data to improve student learning as an integral part of your assessment processes.

What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

Reviewed by **Kirstan Neukam** (Primary Mentor)

You might want to contact Coconino County Community College. They are also using Canvas for their outcome collection process. They might have some useful suggestions to share.

With regard to your template question: there are many different program and outcome reporting templates available. If need some examples, please let me know, be happy to email you a few that are detailed and yet generic enough to work for any program.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

Also, if you plan to attend the HLC Annual Conference, there will be opportunity for mentor consultation, if that would be a useful resource to you at this time.

Reviewed by **Kirstan Neukam** (Primary Mentor)

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (Scholar)