Gen Ed and the Top 10/10 Courses

A Cohort Project of The Higher Learning Academy for Assessment of Student Learning
South Mountain Community College
February 2009

Academy Plan
Describe your plan for creating shared responsibility for assessing and improving student learning (100 - 200 words).

The Higher Learning Academy Team will work cooperatively with the Academic Program Review and Assessment of Student Learning (APRASL) campus committee, the Teaching and Learning Center (TLC), and the areas encompassing Student Affairs to insure participation and support at all levels of campus employees – residential faculty, adjunct faculty, staff, and administration. APRASL oversees assessment at the course, program, and institutional levels and has laid the groundwork for the implementation of our project. The TLC will be the principle instrument through which faculty are trained in writing course-level outcomes and developing course-level assessments of our general education outcomes.

The plan initially focuses on the faculty teaching our top 10 FTSE generating courses and our top 10 developmental courses. They will be convened to write course outcomes for these courses (our district curriculum currently focuses on course competencies/objectives) that map to our four general education outcomes (Critical & Creative Thinking; Quantitative Reasoning; Information Literacy; and Written and Oral Communication). Training to write outcomes will be a critical part of these meetings. Assessment strategies for each course (common across all sections) will then be developed, implemented and evaluated. The process will then be expanded to other courses and programs as well.

A fifth general education outcome, which we have labeled "The SMCC Experience", will focus on personal growth, student satisfaction and engagement in learning and personal development both in and outside the classroom. All areas of Student Affairs will be incorporated.

A capstone Humanities course will be developed which fosters departmental and faculty partnerships and engages students in applying their overall learning to a project serving as a summative assessment of our general education outcomes.

Results from the above assessments would be incorporated at the administrative level in terms of the budgeting process, the allocation of resources, and communication back to the community stakeholders.

What is the broader impact of your Academy work on the institution, faculty and staff, students, or other stakeholders? How will this work influence the culture of your organization, build institutional capacity, advance teaching and learning...etc. (100 - 200 words)?

Currently, our curriculum is defined at the district level (comprised of ten individual colleges) and is competency/objective driven. As our top ten FTSE-generating courses (and our top developmental courses) move toward defining course-level outcomes, there will be a re-focusing in our courses that will be mapped to our general education outcomes, and a paradigm shift in our culture. A common summative assessment across all sections of a course will also bring about a certain level of curriculum reform at SMCC, greater commitment to student learning and enhanced community of both adjunct and residential faculty within a department. This should trickle down to improved (and similar) student experiences both institutionally and within specific programs. Institutionally, the data derived from the assessment of the core classes will be utilized in the budgeting process and as well as the allocation of campus resources to help insure that students are attaining success in our general education efforts.

Optional: What else is important to know about your work on assessing and improving student learning? (100 - 200 words)?
Approximately 1/4 of our residential faculty are in the first five years of their contracts. These are considered "probationary" faculty. With these newer faculty members, we have a dramatic window of opportunity in bringing about cultural change in the faculty ranks, in our curriculum and in the campus learning environment as a whole. We also plan to focus on training these faculty members to think pedagogically and teach in terms of outcomes.

We see greater faculty engagement on discussions surrounding assessment, student learning issues, and our general education outcomes across the curriculum to be critical to the success of our project. Greater emphasis will be placed on providing opportunities for these discussions, encouraging participation and publishing summaries of the discussions. This will be accomplished at our monthly faculty senate meetings, department/division meetings, and faculty brown bag lunches. Furthermore, we recognize that "assessment" largely has negative connotations for many of our faculty, so we will make a concerted effort to move the discussion from "assessment" to "student learning".

Project Questions
Student Learning Project (SLP) Title (10 word or less)
General Education and the Top 10/10 Courses

Describe the SLP in 100 - 200 words
The Higher Learning Academy Team saw several issues needing attention in our assessment practices. 1.) We have lacked defined general education outcomes specific to our college. In 2008, the APRASL committee suggested five general education outcomes and convened faculty subcommittees to further define each outcome. The result was semantic confusion, overlap between outcomes, and general animosity toward the process and the results. 2.) A longstanding process of formative and summative course review has focused on individual sections of courses, but true across-the-sections evaluation of courses has been lacking on our campus. 3.) Our curriculum (decided at a district level with input from ten colleges) focuses on subject-matter competencies/objectives.

As a result of our participation in the Academy Roundtable (February 2009), we simplified the general education outcomes for SMCC as:
- **Critical and Creative Thinking**
- **Quantitative Analysis**
- **Information Literacy**
- **Written and Oral Communication**

These will be left as broad sweeping areas without further restrictive definition.

Our primary project will be for the faculty of our the top ten college-level enrolled courses and our top ten developmental courses to write course outcomes that can be mapped to our general education outcomes, and then to develop, implement, and evaluate course-level assessments of student achievement with regards to these outcomes. The assessments for each course would be deployed across all sections (probably as summative activities, though some could be embedded projects), with the data collected being anonymous as to the section/instructor. The data would be used in our budgeting process, further curriculum development, and the allocation of resources.

Secondary projects include:
Formation of "The SMCC Experience", in essence a fifth general education outcome, focusing on student personal growth, student satisfaction and engagement in learning and personal development both in and outside the classroom. It will address empowering the learner, verifying readiness for the next step after graduation, global awareness, cultural sensitivity, ethical courses of action, civic responsibility and setting educational, personal and career goals. Assessment instruments would likely include both direct and indirect measures and will incorporate both academic departments and divisions, as well as all areas of student affairs (registration, financial aid, advisement, facilities, etc.)

Development and delivery of a capstone Humanities course which engages students in demonstrating that they have attained the general education outcomes and can apply the corporate learning gained in their studies at SMCC to a project that would serve as a summative assessment of our general education outcomes.

Increase faculty dialog and awareness of student learning issues and assessment practices. These will be conducted at monthly Faculty Senate meetings, brown bag lunch discussions, department/division meetings, and special training workshops. **A newsletter** will be produced by the HLA team and APRASL to help create a focal point around Student Learning Outcomes.

Please check the categories that best captures the content and scope of your project

<u>Nature of project</u>	<u>Degree level</u>
General Education	Associates Degree
Co-curricular/student affairs	Baccalaureate Degree
Comprehensive Assessment System	Graduate Degree
Faculty Development	

<u>Assessment Cycle</u>
Writing Outcomes
Creating data collection instrument(s)
Collecting data
Analyzing data
Using data to implement change

List the organizational area (departments, programs, divisions) most affected or involved with this SLP. (50 - 100 words)

- **Faculty** (especially instructors of our top ten FTSE-generating college-level courses and our developmental education courses) These will include Math, English, Psychology, Computer Information Systems, Critical Reading, Biology, and Religious Studies faculty.
- **Teaching & Learning Center (TLC)** – will be instrumental in training and conducting workshops on writing objectives.
- **The Academic Program Review and Assessment of Student Learning (APRASL)** subcommittee will oversee the collection *of* data from the course-level assessments and collectively of our general education outcomes.
- **Student Affairs** will be involved in the creation of "The SMCC Experience" and in developing or obtaining assessment instruments.

Specifically, what are the desired results of this project? These results should be measurable, attainable, relevant, & time-bound (SMART). In addition, one or more of these desired results should (a) directly relate to student learning; (b) generate evidence of student learning; or (c) demonstrate improvement of student learning. (100 - 150 words)

- Course-Level outcomes for our highest-enrolled courses that map to the general education outcomes.
- Common course-level outcomes assessment for top our top ten college-level and top ten developmental courses.
- Development of a capstone Humanities course with an emphasis toward engaging students in applying their corporate learning gained at SMCC to a project serving as a summative assessment of our general education outcomes.
- Development and assessment of "The SMCC Experience" evaluating student satisfaction, learning engagement, preparation for the "next step", cultural sensitivity, global awareness, etc.

Please answer the following questions regarding planning and managing this Student Learning Project or post an internet link that clearly provides the pertinent information:

a. **A detailed description of the activities/tasks that are necessary to ensure each of the above outcomes or results are met. For example, who will be doing what, step by step? (approximately100 words)**

SPRING 2009
- HLC Site visit feedback. HLA Team makes any modifications necessary to project plan. (HLA Team)
- Communicate Project direction to division chairs (Linda)
- Communicate Project direction to faculty – email / newsletter (Stephen)
- Convene probationary faculty (Amy)
- Agree on Vocabulary/terminology (APRASL)
- Dialog outcomes with Top 10 & Dev Ed faculty (HLA Team)

SUMMER 2009
- *Develop project website (Stephen)*

FALL 2009
- Outcomes Workshop with all faculty (Amy & Stephen)
- Top 10 Course meetings: Develop Outcomes (Amy, Stephen, & consultants)
- Dev Ed Course meetings : Develop Outcomes (Amy, Stephen & consultants)
- Map Top 10 outcomes to General Education Outcomes (APRASL; HLA Team)
- Develop HUM (3 credit) capstone as Gen Ed assessment instrument (Matt)
- *Communicate progress/next steps – Newsletter (Stephen)*
- *Time allotted for faculty discussions on Student Learning at Faculty Senate meetings (Terry)*

SPRING 2010
- Gather Course Gen Ed Mappings (APRASL; HLA Team)
- Matrix published – Gen Ed / Courses (Stephen)
- Develop assessment strategy of course outcomes for Top 10 & Dev Ed (HLA Team; APRASL; course faculty)
- Implement HUM capstone as Gen Ed assessment instrument (Matt)
- *Develop SMCC Experience outcomes (HLA Team; Student Services)*
- *Communicate progress/next steps – Newsletter (Stephen)*
- *Time allotted for faculty discussions on Student Learning at Faculty Senate meetings (Terry)*

FALL 2010
- FALL 2010: Assessment of 10/10 implemented; data gathered (HLA Team; Course faculty)
- FALL 2010: Communicate SMCC Experience (co-curricular Gen Ed) (HLA Team; Student Services)
- *Assessment of Capstone course data (HLA team; APRASL) Make adjustments (Matt)*
- *Communicate progress/next steps – Newsletter (Stephen)*

SPRING 2011
- Assessment of 10/10; data gathered (HLA Team; Course faculty)
- Fall 10/10 data analyzed & brainstorm/implement improvements (HLA Team; APRASL; Course Faculty)
- *Humanities Capstone course offered again and data collected (Matt)*
- Operationalize SMCC Experience & include into Matrix (HLA Team; Student Services)
- Develop assessment strategy for Gen Ed outcomes 1-4 (APRASL)
- *Communicate progress/next steps – Newsletter (Stephen)*

FALL 2011
- Spring '11 data analyzed & brainstorm/implement improvements (HLA Team; APRASL; Course faculty)
- Develop Assessment of SMCC Experience (APRASL; Student Services)

- *Assessment of Capstone course data (HLA team; APRASL) Make adjustments (Matt)*
- *Communicate progress/next steps – Newsletter (Stephen)*

SPRING 2012
- Analyze data of SMCC Experience (HLA Team; APRASL; Student Services)
- *Humanities Capstone course offered again and data collected (Matt)*
- *Communicate progress/next steps – Newsletter (Stephen*
- Academy Showcase Presentation (April) (HLA Team);
- Implement assessment of Gen Ed 1-4 (HAL Team; APRASL)

b. The timeline for each of the above activities/tasks. Each timeline should be on a quarterly timescale or finer. (approximately 50 words)
Timeline included in the above activities list.

c. A short rationale for the length of time (from implementation to completion) for the SLP. (approximately 50 words)
The Project will initially take three years to design, develop and implement. There are significant barriers to overcome. The movement from course competencies to outcomes will represent a dramatic change in pedagogy and curriculum development. Our goal is to impact the core classes in the first three years and to then have this spread to other courses outside the scope and timeline of this project.

- **Describe how you plan to monitor the progress on this SLP (100-200 words)**
  The HLA Team will ultimately monitor the progress of the project against the goals and activity list set forth above. The HLA team will be responsible to the APRASL committee and the Vice President of Academic Affairs. Progress will be reported each semester to the college via a newsletter.

- **What are the specific indicators (evidence) that will tell you if this SLP is successful or not? (100 -150 words)**
  ☐ Course level outcomes developed for each of our top 10 college level courses and our top 10 developmental courses.
  ☐ Matrix of General Education Outcomes developed and published.
  ☐ Common Course Assessment strategy developed, implemented, and meaningful* data gathered for each of our top 10 college level courses and our top 10 developmental courses. (*meaningful data is that which is useful in improving our courses, programs, and institution and/or which is usefully applied in budget and strategic planning decisions)
  ☐ Course outcome of our top 10 college level courses and our top 10 developmental courses mapped to our General Education Outcomes.
  ☐ Meaningful* assessment data gathered from SMCC Experience
  ☐ Capstone humanities course developed and meaningful assessment data gathered from the course.
  ☐ Faculty discussions on student learning becoming a greater part of our campus culture.

- **Are there products (e.g., instruments, rubrics, ..etc) that can be shared from this project? If so, post an internet link and provide a short description. (less 25 words)**
  We anticipate developing workshop handouts on writing course outcomes, as well as developing assessment instruments for our core classes and ultimately

for our general education outcomes. Our newsletters will also be shared.

- **Project Links**
  A website will be developed during Summer 2009.