

Action Project

Project Title	Closing the Loop
Created	AY 2012-2013
Updated	NA
Reviewed	NA
Status	Active

Project Goal

This project extends a previous action project (Closing the Loop) which was a pilot assessment evaluating how academic units assess student learning outcomes. One of the key findings of the pilot was that many units were doing very well, while some reported a need for assistance in crafting unit assessment plans. The goal of this action project is to identify assessment processes already in place across the university which faculty believe are effective or exemplar practices which could be used as an example for other units.

Reasons for Undertaking this Project

It is critical to ensure that processes are in place to effectively use data to enact positive change in curriculum and policy within units. Some colleges (e.g., College of Business Administration) have hired assessment coordinators and are currently working through the establishment of processes which will undoubtedly improve collection, dissemination and use of data. However, in the current absence of this type of position in every college, the Advisory Committee on Academic Assessment (ACAA) has been charged with the task of determining improved methods of communicating and using data which may benefit all academic units. Specifically, the Closing the Loop subcommittee of ACAA is exploring what processes are currently in place and how to both support those effectively as well as model effective processes for other units to adopt.

Organizational Areas Affected

The organizational areas involved and affected by this action project include: all academic units - departments/schools, colleges and campuses; Office of the Provost and the Advisory Committee on Academic Assessment which is composed of members from all colleges with Academic Affairs, as well as representation from Office of Continuing Studies, Faculty Senate, Regional campuses, the Office of Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness, Information Services, University Libraries, Undergraduate Student Government and Graduate Senate.

Key Organizational Process(es)

Key organizational processes that we aim to improve include ensuring students are meeting/mastering unit learning goals (helping students learn), better alignment of learning outcomes, and systematic use of results to improve learning (measuring effectiveness).

Project Time Frame Rationale

The time-frame for this action project is two years (2013-2015). During the 2013-14 academic year, a subcommittee was charged to oversee this action project. The

Closing the Loop subcommittee created a plan of action that began in fall 2013 with exploratory visits to various faculty groups (see list below). The purpose of the visits is to conduct an informal environmental scan of the types of assessment processes in place in Academic Affairs units. The visits will be conducted until May 2014.

Analysis of the results of these visits will be conducted during Summer 2014. It is expected that the subcommittee may wish to drill down deeper with certain units and with regard to particular projects and processes. Therefore, additional visits will continue into the 2014-15 academic year via surveys and/or revisits. By fall 2015, the Closing the Loop subcommittee plans to have established some best practice type exemplars underway at the university as well as resources from other institutions and assessment research which will be part of a toolbox for academic units to use for assessment planning. Faculty groups visited/surveyed by the Closing the Loop Subcommittee of ACAA include:

- University Teaching Council
- University Requirement Curriculum Committee
- Dean Council (including regional campus deans)
- Education Policies Council
- Chairs and Directors Council
- Faculty Senate Council
- College of Public Health
- College of Arts and Sciences Chairs meeting

Non-faculty groups were also visited/surveyed but the focus of this action project is academic assessment.

Project Success Monitoring

The end result will be the identification and communication of best practice exemplars which may be adopted by other units for use in their own assessment practices. However, it should be noted that some success has already been observed in that a more open dialogue about assessment and sharing of assessment success as well as frustrations and roadblocks have been established. It is the subcommittee's goal that those units which have not yet moved to a more systematic way of collecting data, communicating results and using the results to enact change will begin to formulate these plans even as the Closing the Loop subcommittee is continuing its work toward gauging the climate and suggesting methods for advancing assessment. The subcommittee meets 1-2 times a month to work on project. In addition, the co-chairs of the subcommittee, provide an monthly update to the overall ACAA committee.

Project Outcome Measures

The overall outcome measures for this action project include:

- evidence of unit wide assessment plans which include methods to gather data, communicate data within and across units and documented curricular or policy change related to use of the data
- establishment of a toolbox of resources and best practice exemplars to aid units in the establishment and improvement of their assessment plans
- on-going dialogue and a cultural shift which supports sharing of data, showcasing successes and discussing and resolving roadblocks.