

UW was accepted into the Higher Learning Commission's Assessment Academy in early 2020. In October of 2020, the Assessment Team submitted a proposal for a four-year project and it was accepted by our HLC mentor and HLC scholar. The first part of this project was designed to gather the low-hanging fruit, which is being captured by our assessment survey. The other major portion of the project entails working with the NexGen USP committee to ensure assessment is a key portion of the upcoming USP.

Describe the project that you have developed at the Roundtable. Focus particularly on the general strategies you developed.

The University of Wyoming had a very robust and effective assessment process in place, but for some reason, this process fell apart at the administration level in 2016. Our project is to review the overall assessment process that existed up to 2016 and identify the most effective elements of this process to incorporate into the new process. One of these elements that we are going to keep is the assessment tier level. Programs would self-identify in their annual reports what assessment tier level they felt they were in and would provide justification. The assessment coordinator would review this report and determine if the program had placed themselves into the appropriate tier and would provide feedback to the program. This reporting system worked very well, but was not requested from the administrative level starting in 2016. This shortcoming has been identified as low-hanging fruit that we can immediately pick.

In order to gauge how each undergraduate and graduate program is doing in assessment, we are creating a survey that will be sent out in January 2021, that must be completed in lieu of their annual assessment report. We are doing this for two reasons: 1) the assessment report hasn't been collected for 4 years and many who were involved in the old process have moved on, so the brain trust has been lost. In addition, with upcoming budget cuts and faculty/staff being overwhelmed by doing more with less, we want to keep the initial assessment data collection simple and not overburden them. 2) The assessment coordinator team needs to know where to focus our efforts, and having a snapshot of where each program is in the assessment process will help us fine tune our efforts. This low-hanging fruit leads into the large 4-year project.

Our general education program is undergoing its 10-year review and the HLC Assessment Academy team lead is a member of this review committee. The current gen ed program is a success, but the assessment element for this program has never been successfully established. The Assessment Academy team wants to be intimately involved in the creation of the new gen ed program development to ensure that assessment is a central element that runs throughout it. Our milestones for the next four years are:

Year 1 Milestone(s) (by October 2021)

- Survey data collected and analyzed to determine the tier level of each program (undergraduate and graduate)
- Complete review of Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and current gen ed learning outcomes
- Create teams (faculty, staff, and students) to help the assessment coordinators with creating and re-establishing assessment processes (these teams will be an integral part of the four-year project with marketing, data analysis, buy-in, etc.)

Year 2 Milestone(s) (by October 2022)

- Map gen learning outcomes to ILOs and ensure new gen ed's program learning outcomes align well with ILOs
- Roll in student affairs into the assessment process (leadership, service, etc.)

Year 3 Milestone(s) (by October 2023)

- Create assessment rubric for the new gen program (based off of lessons learned from the gen ed program it is replacing)
- Beta test the new rubric to ensure it measuring what we value and is producing actionable data

Year 4 Milestone(s) (by October 2024)

- New gen ed program in place
- Approved gen ed rubrics in place
- Gathering data for improve gen ed program
- Begin moving down into the program outcomes

Within the first year or two, the assessment program will move away from an assessment survey and begin using the assessment reports since the reports will provide more data.

What are the desired outcomes of this project? How will you know that you have achieved each of these outcomes?

- By the end of the first year, the assessment team will be able to identify the tier level of each degree program on campus. This will be achieved by using the assessment survey that we are currently creating in Qualtrics. This survey is in lieu of an annual assessment report and will help the assessment academy team quickly gauge a program's tier level while reducing the amount of work on the program's POC.
 1. By the end of the 2nd or 3rd year we will transition the assessment survey back to an annual assessment report. The transition time is uncertain since the current academic environment is unstable, but we expect it to be completed between years 2 and 3.
 2. This annual report will provide the assessment academy team and assessment coordinator committee more granularity in the program-level assessment process. These results will enable the teaching and learning center and assessment coordinator team to engage and help where needed.
- By the end of the second year, we'll have developed a new gen ed rubric. This rubric will be developed by mapping the current gen ed (and proposed) learning outcomes to the ILOs to ensure continuity of effort.
- By the end of the third year, we'll have successfully created and implemented an assessment rubric into the current general ed program so we can beta test it. This will provide us with insight into any adjustments that need to be made to the instrument.
- By the end of the fourth year, we will have incorporated the lessons learned from our beta test to update and fine tune the rubric for inclusion into the new gen ed program.
- The HLC Assessment Academy team and the University of Wyoming's Next Generation General Education team will create a new gen program that will include assessment as an integral piece. The milestones mentioned in the previous 4 bullets will lead to a successful implementation of assessing the gen ed program each year.

How will your project contribute to making assessment an activity that leads to the improvement of student learning?

The current gen ed program appears to be well crafted and running well; however, we have no data to back it up. For instance, I teach a communication 2 class that has 7 learning outcomes associated with the gen ed comm requirements, but I don't report any assessment data on these 7 learning outcomes, nor do the vast majority of gen ed instructors. There is no way for us to prove that we are achieving the gen ed comm requirements because no assessment is being done.

The University of Wyoming has taken members from the HLC Assessment Academy Team and intentionally put them on the Next Generation Gen Ed committee. During the charter meeting, the AVP for Academic Affairs (also on the Assessment Academy Team) gave us our charge that during the creation of the new gen ed program, assessment must be built into it so UW can prove that all students in the gen ed program are achieving the learning outcomes. With this data, we can track the students' progress towards the outcomes and make any necessary changes. This will be a huge improvement over what is currently done.

Describe the specific steps that you will be taking in Year 1 to develop and implement the early stages of your project.

During year one, we'll accomplish the following steps:

- Create an assessment survey to quickly gauge the tier level of all undergraduate- and graduate-level programs
- Beta test the assessment survey in November and December to make any necessary refinements
- Publish and disseminate the survey in January to all program POCs
- January-February: compare survey tier results to the last published assessment review (summer 2016) to identify any trends
 - o These trends will help the the teaching and learning center know what training programs to create
 - o These trends will help the assessment coordinators know where to focus their efforts at the program level
- March-May: complete review of UW's Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision, and Goals and identify institutional learning outcomes
 - o This will ensure we can determine the alignment of all lower-level learning outcomes
 - o Identify areas of institutional learning outcome improvement
- June-September: Have assessment coordinators help program POCs map course/program learning outcomes to institutional learning outcome to ensure alignment. This will also make assessment of student learning outcomes easier since they will all have a map from the course to the institution

What serious challenges do you expect to encounter? How will you deal with them?

The administration, from the president to the AVP of Academic Affairs to the Deans, are onboard with getting assessment back up and running. Their support will remove a lot of hurdles that other institutions may face. However, low moral, program reviews, and stressed faculty will make this process more challenging. UW recently stood up an assessment coordinators team to assist with assessment in each program. We are reducing the requirement for a complete annual assessment report to an assessment survey. We will have the Teaching and Learning Center

distribute the survey with an explanation of why we are conducting it (see what areas of training we need to focus on). Hopefully, coming from the friendly teaching and learning center, faculty will not think a bad survey may result in budget cuts and unfavorable program reviews that are currently taking place. Our biggest concern is dishonest answers on the survey since faculty may believe the survey could negatively impact their programs. We are going to create a marketing plan to help get the faculty onboard instead of having them run away from the survey.