Developing a Systems Perspective

AQIP calls for self-assessment within a quality framework. Embracing this concept requires adopting a Systems Perspective. Systems perspective is a way of thinking that goes beyond specific behaviors or events by focusing on relationships and interconnectedness. The relationships and interconnectedness are RESPONSIBLE for the resulting patterns of behavior and events. Rather than concentrating on individual operational “silos,” institutions focus on quality improvement opportunities that come from connections between units, the reliance of a unit on others, and from overlooked options for collaboration among the pieces.

To learn more about reaffirmation of accreditation through AQIP, visit www.aqip.org

WWCC SELF-STUDY In Motion

Vital Few Update
In the last two newsletters, the Vital Few were outlined in terms of a plan, measures & outcomes, and use of results. Below is an update on those activities.

Vital Few #1—Writing Across the Curriculum, emphasis on citing of sources
The follow-up faculty survey results, which also included part-time faculty, were outlined during the Spring 2006 in-service. One piece of helpful information was in terms of Smarthinking. The survey revealed that training was a major factor in new faculty implementing Smarthinking into classes. Offering training combined with previous success by faculty apparently made a major impact on the numbers of other faculty willing to use Smarthinking for both writing/referenced assignments and tutoring. Finding ways to make this connection with part-time/adjunct faculty is something that the Faculty Resources Facilitator is trying to focus on while promoting staff development in this sector of the faculty.

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CAAP Comparisons
One of the major components of the WWCC assessment program in terms of student learning is the CAAP. The Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) is the standardized, nationally normed assessment program from ACT that enables institutions to measure, evaluate, and enhance the outcomes of their general education programs.

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- Vital Few Update
- CAAP Comparisons
- Program Review: Identifying Learning Goals

CALENDAR
- March 9, 2006
  A-Team Meeting at noon in A-101
- March 10, 2006
  Instructional Program Review Chairs Committee Meeting at 3 p.m. in 1310.
- April 6, 2006
  A-Team Meeting at noon in 1348
- April 11, 2006
  Assessment Day 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in various rooms

For more information...

Instructional Support
Room 1310
Sandy Caldwell x1720
Vital Few Update cont.

Vital Few #2—Computer Competency Assessment Tool
After a successful “test drive” of the SAM Challenge Computer Competency in the Assessment Portfolio course in Fall 2005, there were some concerns about how to administer the assessment to online and outreach Assessment Portfolio & Portfolio/Capstone students. With the purchase of a site license and with the willingness of Thompson to provide CDs to off-site students, the immediate concerns with this assessment may be reasonably worked out.

Vital Few #3—Word Processing Across the Curriculum
A WP Competency using SAM Challenge as a skill competency for new students to identify those students needing a computer based/wp course during their first few semesters was developed and “test driven” during the Spring 2006 Orientation. Some concerns were raised about the high number of students not meeting minimum competency. Hopefully, the Fall 2006 Orientations beginning in April will provide more concrete numbers.

CAAP Comparisons cont.

For more information on CAAP visit www.act.org.

How did WWCC do? In other words, are the differences in WWCC scores truly different from the national averages? Or, are the differences due to factors other than student ability such as sample size or testing variations? Results from 2003-2005:

Writing: In 2005 only, WWCC mean CAAP Writing score was significantly greater than the National Average (p=.007).

Mathematics: In 2003 only, WWCC mean CAAP Mathematics score was significantly greater than the National Average (p=.01). Although the WWCC scores for 2004 and 2005 were not statistically significant compared to the National Average, there exists a clear downward trend for the WWCC mathematics scores as compared to an upward trend in the National Average.

Reading: In 2003, 2004, and 2005, WWCC mean CAAP Reading scores were significantly greater than the National Average (p=.02, .0025, .01).

Critical Thinking: In 2003, 2004, and 2005, WWCC mean CAAP Critical Thinking scores were significantly greater than the National Average (p<<.001). Over the three years, the WWCC scores reflected a similar trend as the National Average. This type of trend would indicate that fluctuations within the WWCC scores over the three year timeframe may be a product of variations in the test and scoring rather than actual student performance.

Program Review: Identifying Learning Goals

Before we can even begin to assess what students have learned in our individual instructional programs, we must first decide—as a department or program—what primary skills or knowledge we think our students should learn and retain. It’s impossible to measure or assess that which we have not defined.

As a program, discuss the following: What should students be able to DO or KNOW well at this stage? What skills or knowledge must students retain long-term and transfer to other courses or situations? Focus on a reasonable list of content-specific learning goals (4-7) for students at the freshman/sophomore level. Start with the end in mind: what do you want your students to know when they have completed your program? These content-specific learning goals will be in addition to and may support one or more Goals for Student Success that will also be listed in the program review. Try not to generalize. Be specific, concrete, and direct.

Maybe start with a phrase such as “Our program’s graduates should have:
- The ability to...
- An understanding of...
- Gained an awareness of...”

If your program identifies a reasonable set (4-7) of clear, measurable learning goals, both you and your students will benefit. If your program sets clear expectations, then students in all the program’s courses will understand the objectives and can target those skills. You will focus your energies and strengthen their learning in KEY areas—versus “covering the material.” Your satisfaction and theirs will improve.