

WASC Retreat – January 2009

WASC Retreat on Student Learning and Assessment
January 29 – 31, 2009
Laney College Team Report

Team Members:

Donald Moore, VP Student Services
Tina Vasconcellos, Dean of Matriculation
Linda Sanford, Dean of Humanities, Language Arts and Social Sciences
Karolyn van Putten, Faculty Senate President
Cheli Fossum, SLO Coordinator
Rich Hashimoto, Welding Instructor

Overview:

Our general purpose in attending this retreat was to learn enough to move the college forward in development and assessment of program level outcomes. Additionally, we wanted to know how much assessment is enough in meeting the accreditation standards.

Each college team was assigned a mentor and paired with other colleges. Our mentor was Tanya Renner and we were grouped with College of the Marshall Islands, Merced College, Northern Mariana Islands College and Palomar College. A plenary session started each day, followed by work sessions in which teams met with their mentor and/or worked on team planning. On the second day, team planning was interspersed with two lecture/discussion periods in which individual team members went to other locations. There were four different lectures in each of the two sessions and team members went to the lectures that they deemed most salient in completion of the team planning project and then shared what they learned with the entire team during the work sessions. At the end of the second day, we also met with Barbara Wright, WASC Associate Director, to discuss our General Education SLOs and questions that we had pertaining to assessment of GE outcomes.

Lectures and Plenaries:

Plenary 1: *Learning-centered Pedagogy and Assessment: Focused for Student Success* by Amy Driscoll. Ms. Driscoll articulated the rationale for and scholarship of the impact of learner-centered pedagogy and assessment.

Plenary 2: *Assessment in Learning-Centered Institutions* by Mary Allen. Ms Allen articulated the reasons for emphasizing a learning-centered focus and the need for a cohesive curriculum that includes program assessment.

Lecture 1: *An Outcomes-based Assessment Model for General Education* by Amy Driscoll. This provided an opportunity to design components of a model for assessment of general education outcomes, tailored to the institution's purpose and mission.

Lecture 2: *Assessment for Student Affairs Staff and Other Campus Professionals* by Mary Allen. This provided an overview of several different ways to assess student services programs.

Lecture 3: *Unique Issues in Assessment for Community Colleges* by Gary Williams. Participants discussed the nature of the students served by their institutions and the implications for assessment of student learning outcomes that flow from these considerations.

Lecture 4: *Direct and Indirect Approaches to Assessment* by Barbara Wright. Criteria for selecting assessment techniques and various types of techniques were discussed.

Lecture 5: *Developing and Applying Rubrics* by Mary Allen. Participants reviewed rubric examples.

Lecture 6: *Analyzing Student Learning to Improve Our Practice* by Amy Driscoll. Discussion focused upon the analysis of assessment results.

Lecture 7: *Assessment for Community College Career and Technical Educational Programs* by Gary Williams. Focus was upon analysis of the curricular design and common ways to assess behavioral and performance outcomes for competency-based programs.

Lecture 8: *The Administrator's Role in Assessment of Student Learning* by Cyd Jenefsky. This workshop defined the administrators' role in creating a learning environment for the college campus that is active, concrete, relevant and routine.

What did we learn? What do we want to do next?

- There is no specific amount of assessment that we must do. If we are able to use the information to improve our programs, then what we have done is good enough. Examination of our teaching and learning is essential to creation of positive change.
 - Assessment is ongoing. We are always in an assessment cycle.
 - We need to make a comprehensive list of programs at Laney. This includes: degrees, certificates, general education, and student services units. Assessment of sequences of courses, learning communities and grant funded programs like CAA is useful, but not necessary for compliance.
 - Alignment of outcomes (course, program, GE, institution) is critical.
 - We need to develop an assessment philosophy statement – short enough to be easy to remember – aligned with our mission statement and values.
 - We wish to continue as a task force to ensure that our plans are carried forth.
 - Three areas of emphasis emerged as needing our attention:
 1. Communication/Dissemination of Information
 2. Strategies that Encourage Dialogue (buy-in)
 3. Sharing Responsibility
-

Communication/Dissemination of Information

- Use language that encourages and supports innovation.
- Use the phrase “learner-centered” whenever possible.
- Be consistent in the messaging.
- Develop an assessment philosophy that is learner-centered and aligned with the Mission Statement.
- President to lead by framing his language as “learner-centered”. He has to do it everywhere.
- Communication mechanisms include:
 - E-mail
 - Eagle Flies
 - LAC newsletter
 - LAC Meetings
 - Department Chair meetings
 - Division meetings
 - Student Services Council
 - College Council
 - Faculty Senate
 - Classified Senate
 - ASLC meetings
 - Flyers (posted and in mailboxes)
 - Bulletin Boards
 - Opening Ceremonies
 - FLEX Day activities
 - Website (links from homepage)
 - Develop a new Assessment webpage
 - Department meetings
 - Cluster meetings for SLO leads
 - Individual meetings with Deans
 - Special notices of events, rewards and activities
 - Brown Bag discussions
- Disseminate examples of program outcomes to everyone.
- Disseminate GE outcomes to everyone.
- Disseminate WASC rubrics to everyone
- Let everyone know that we are now focusing upon program level outcomes
- Communicate ALL information again and again. Do not assume that one communication is enough.

Strategies that Encourage Dialogue (buy-in or ownership)

- Formulate user groups and/or teaching communities for people with common interests.
- Use rewards/honor the accomplishments regularly
- Develop incentives (stipends, release time, prizes, gifts)
- Professional Development Day activities
- Develop a network of cluster leads (regular meetings for the leads)
- Adjust meeting times so that more people can attend (move away from lunch-time)
- Personal invitations (phone, notes, cards, etc)
- Have a trained facilitator at Department Chair, Division, and Departmental meetings to keep the dialogue consistent
- Retreats (focused by area and/or need --- no open free-for-alls).
- Regular Workshops
- Yearly Assessment Faire
- Orientation for new faculty
- Distribute rubrics
- Share assessment methods examples
- Survey faculty needs
- Schedule common assessment sessions for review of rubrics, norming and scoring.
- Bring in the experts for presentations and discussions
- Start assessing GE outcomes with a small group that are likely to be successful. Herald them, again and again.
- Cultivate and celebrate the champions.
- Publish assessment results
- Funnel assessment results to existing committees

Sharing Responsibility

- President frames the dialogue
- Task Force to develop a timeline for all action steps indicating areas of responsibility and responsible parties
- Train more people to lead assessment workshops
- Train at least one person from each large department to be the assessment coordinator for the department
- Designate facilitators for meetings and workshops
- Develop a training manual and forms that all can use
- Form an Institutional Effectiveness Committee for purposes of funneling all assessment related activities through it. Should be comprised of only the most knowledgeable assessment people on campus.
- Have an assessment office, staffed by faculty.
- Model at all levels: in meetings, discussions, memos, publications. At the very least state what the desired outcomes for each are and periodically assess whether the outcomes have been met.
- Disseminate results of this retreat to Administrative Leadership Council, Student Services Council, Faculty Senate, Learning Assessment Committee and others.