

Carl Albert State College  
Poteau, OK  
Assessment Academy  
"Viking Exploration"

Start  
2018



Institutional Context

CASC entered the Academy with a thirty-year deficit in assessment of student learning. Although faculty had invested tremendous effort in course assessment, the process had many fundamental flaws, which impeded advancement to the program level. As added pressure, the team had an impending focused visit on assessment a few months following the first Academy Roundtable event. The next hurdle was a monitoring report over specific advancements of academic program and co-curricular assessments. In the fall of 2022, the College will have a comprehensive visit with a follow-up on our efforts.

Project Scope:

Transition from course to program level assessment  
Create and implement co-curricular and non-academic assessments

Program Assessment Leaders (PALs)

Program Assessment Leaders (PALs) are designated full-time faculty members from each academic program who provide active support to faculty-driven assessment processes for a two-year period. PALs assist with the transition to faculty-driven assessment and help with sustainability.

Pilot Projects and Assess Assessment

It was very helpful to pilot our processes to work out the initial kinks and to serve as examples for other programs to follow. However, everyone must remember that processes are part of continuous improvement too. Also, we have learned to assess our assessment processes and tools as we advance our efforts.

Unfortunately, Assessment Isn't a Love Affair, but It Shouldn't be Punitive.  
An initial response to assessment is the fear of being evaluated and/or the fear of failure. Assessment is investigative and diagnostic in nature for continuous improvement. Understanding this principle breaks down a major barrier. There is a tendency to measure what is safe and to massage the data for success. We have battled that misconception and encourage our faculty and staff that failing forward is better than stagnation.

Mission-Based Assessment  
In our journey from course to program level assessment, our transition started with creating a framework for each program: mission statement, curricular goals, and program student learning outcomes. It set in motion our change of mindset from individual courses to a coherent whole. We use a similar structure for general education, co-curricular, and non-academic assessments.

Change Management  
The focus on buy-in is really change management. It begins with a management plan to gain buy-in and to provide education/training at various stages. Change evokes many psychological responses, such as fear, anger, and avoidance. Faculty and staff need to understand why it is being implemented and the desired outcome. During project management planning, identify barriers and have strategies in place to deal with those. Also, establish assessment champions of the cause early to help educate others.

Curriculum Mapping  
To introduce curriculum mapping, a best practice is to gather the course descriptions and student learning outcomes of all required/elective courses featured on the map. As faculty discuss course sequencing and the role of the course in the development of the program student learning outcome, the information is a reference. Not all-- but most-- course student learning outcomes should support the program outcomes. This technique also assists with determining the instruction level of the course on the map and viewing the courses as a program not as individual entities.

Sea of Hope

Sea of Despair