

## **Tip Sheet #15: Where Do We Stand on Assessment Planning February 21, 2006**

Yes, it has been quiet on the online assessment forum so far this semester but with some deadlines approaching, it is time to get some perspective on the tasks ahead. Let's return to the FAQ format to cover some broad territory to gear up for the rest of the academic year.

### ***First, can you clarify what we need to do in the departments related to the QEP emphasis on Project Management, which was the focus of a recent memo?***

Yes. As we think about the broad changes we are implementing related to assessment, it is probably helpful to think of having two "masters." We have been drafting and implementing the ALC activity in response to a state educational mandate from the Board of Governors. However, our SACS visit last year also was linked to the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) in which we said we would be highlighting activity in the domain of project management. The recent memo that was sent out was intended to help us provide appropriate data for the project management emphasis driven by SACS.

### ***What do we really need to do to satisfy the QEP mandate?***

We narrowed the QEP on the advice of the SACS team to emphasize activities in the project management domain. If your project management list of outcomes on your official ALC posted on the CUTLA website has not been changed, we can use that list as your department's "definition" of project management so you need not do anything.

### ***What if we have changed our outcomes listed in the Project Management domain?***

If you have officially changed your list of outcomes, we will need to make that official on the website as well. Send any revisions to Judy Jones at [jjones@uwf.edu](mailto:jjones@uwf.edu). In the evolution of how we are thinking about the various domains, it may help your department to know that we "migrated" the sub-area of "Service Learning" or "Civic Engagement" to Project Management. Therefore, if your department's ALC contains those kinds of objectives, it might be worth tweaking your ALC list because it may enhance your opportunity to secure summer funding related to Project Management. (More on this opportunity later)...

### ***Will we need to do any special project management reporting?***

If you have designed a comprehensive assessment plan for the undergraduate program that assesses all domains, you will be asked to summarize the department's achievement at the end of the school year in the annual report. We are currently working on a reporting format that will be flexible to enable you to

tell your assessment story. However, we have a separate reporting obligation in the domain of project management so that we can report that information to SACS in a follow-up report. It may be useful to you to go back and review the curriculum audit that you performed last year to see where you stated that project management transpires in your major. Keep in mind, we do expect changes over time and that might include modifying the curriculum audit or your original list of ALC outcomes if your practice has led to some refinements.

***The recent memo included a more finely detailed list of project management outcomes and terms that don't necessarily reflect how we have defined project management in our program. Must we go back and revise our work to incorporate that list?***

No. The overall roster of PM outcomes that was provided was originally devised by looking at the breadth of outcomes reported across all programs. Those items tended to emphasize project conceptualization and delivery, team work, and self-regulation, but not every department included all those elements in their own description.

***The list of outcomes in that memo did not match the more recent grid that described Project Management introduced in discussions about Academic Foundations. Why is that?***

The recent work done on Academic Foundations helped "service learning/civic engagement" migrate to project management as a way of balancing activities across general education offerings. In majors that provide service learning and civic engagement projects, you might want to go back and modify your ALC to reflect that activity, particularly if it expands the opportunity for you to address project management goals. However, it helps to keep in mind that the various grids and outcomes were not requirements but organizational helpers that item-by-item may not pertain as directly to your major. Most critical is that your department or program has defined project management in a way that truly reflects your intentions for your students. If you wish to consult on whether such a modification would help you or not, please contact me.

***Can you summarize the various dates of assessment activity?***

You bet!

**Undergraduate "Academic Learning Compacts:"**

You should be collecting data according to the assessment plan for undergraduate programs that you submitted last year. You will be reporting the results of those data along with any modifications you made in your program resulting from those data in the next annual report. The report you will make on the undergraduate ALCs will respond to the Board of Governor's expectation. The subset of results that pertain to Project Management will respond to SACS' request for QEP results. **The annual report is due on June 30** and the expected format will be distributed well in advance to help you tell your story effectively.

### **Graduate “Academic Learning Plans:”**

**We expect to see the graduate version of student learning outcomes by March 15.** We think the assessment plan for graduate programs will be far easier than the undergraduate since most programs involve comprehensive examinations or “capstone” works such as theses. The assessment plan should be articulated by the end of the semester.

### **Academic Foundations Planning:**

Your conversations with the department about which two specialized areas your department wishes to respond to should lead to a department commitment on what you want to measure as your contribution to Academic Foundations by the end of the semester. We will need to begin data collection in the fall of 06 to help us address the chief concern of our SACS review—that we had no data to support our effectiveness in general education. Therefore, your department needs to think through the measurement challenge related to the Gen Ed courses that you offer. (This will be the focus of Tip Sheet 16).

### ***Is there any summer funding available to help refine assessment projects as we had last year?***

QEP money will be available to departments to develop the measurement strategy in the form of summer support. We currently have \$30,000 to support department summer activity related to the QEP. The project management focus of the QEP means that plans that include a measurement in this domain will have an edge in award decisions. That reality may encourage you to look for specific ways to document project management effectiveness either in the Academic Learning Compact (the undergrad expectations) or the Academic Foundations (the general education expectations). We expect to get proposals for individual departments that total either \$2500 or \$5000. **The deadline for applying for the summer QEP will be April 24.** Barbara Lyman is also exploring whether any other funding can be allocated to support measurement strategies for other projects beyond project management.

### ***Are there any other activities that we need to know to satisfy QEP requirements?***

Yes. As you probably have figured out already, student learning outcomes need to be a prominent part of your curricular planning to promote curricular “coherence.” Evidence of coherence includes everything from CCR development to syllabus design. The QEP will ask us to report the degree to which the outcomes genuinely drive learning. Therefore, we need to be explicit in discussing how new courses support the outcome plan and we need to encourage evidence of the ALCs specifically in the syllabi.

**Coming soon!**

**Tip Sheet 16: Academic Foundations**

**Tip Sheet 17: Serving Three Masters**