



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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November 12, 2018

President Everette Freeman
Community College of Denver
PO BOX 173363
Denver, CO 80217-3363

Dear President Freeman:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received report on assessment of student learning. No further reports are required.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2020 – 2021. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2026 – 2027.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Tom Bordenkircher (tbordenkircher@hlcommission.org); (800) 621-7440 x 122.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: November 12, 2018

STAFF LIAISON: Tom Bordenkircher

REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

INSTITUTION: Community College of Denver, Denver, CO

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Everette Freeman, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 7/2/2018 on a plan to assess student learning at all curricular and co-curricular levels (institution, program and course).

Plan must include milestones, metrics of measure, collected and analyzed data, evidence that data was used for program improvements, and a plan to benchmark against other like-institutions.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2017 Comprehensive Evaluation.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The Community College of Denver's (CCD) interim report is presented in a clearly written narrative supported with a vast range of pertinent supplemental documents that include the *Program Assessment Guidebook*, the *Co-Curricular Assessment Plan*, *ISLO Assessment Report: IEC*, and many others. These documents are easily accessed--primarily through links embedded in the narrative. Indications are that the report is thorough and candid.

REPORT SUMMARY: Following a brief introduction that provides a succinct context for the body of the report, the document's organizational structure follows closely the outline provided in the Team Report of the institution's 2017 HLC Comprehensive Evaluation, which identified seven assessment-related topics to be addressed. This summary will provide an overview of each, in the order presented.

Develop an institution-wide assessment plan: In this brief section, the report notes that the institution used the 2017-2018 academic year to develop an assessment plan with short and long term goals as well as a defined assessment schedule. The first year of the plan centered on "*filling the gaps in our assessment practices...*" and creating assessment plans for instructional, co-curricular and institutional learning goals.

Include an assessment of the College's institutional outcomes: The institution's Institutional Effectiveness--which is constituted of representation from both the faculty and staff—formed an Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLO) Task Force, which helps oversee plans for institutional outcomes assessment on an annual basis.

Here the report describes the process undertaken during the “*inaugural year*,” in which “*numeric thinker and visual communicator*” outcomes would be assessed. The document outlines this specific assessment process, noting how artifacts were chosen and assessed and the benchmark that was assigned in “*numeric thinker*.” Subsequent review of the results has led to changes with regard to assessment practices and the originally identified benchmark, which the institution acknowledged was “*more an aspirational goal than a benchmark*.”

Include both curricular and co-curricular offerings: The report notes that the College “*has two primary points of documentation of our instructional practices that each program must deliver...*” These are the Assessment Report, submitted annually, and the Assessment Plan, which has a five-year term but can be updated when “*the department deems necessary*.” At this point, the report provides two timelines, the first showing the development and review of assessment plans, the second outlining the schedule by which the College worked to improve its Assessment Reports.

This section of the report also addresses the institution's compliance with Colorado State Department of Education Guidelines pertaining to General Education, noting that, until recently, the institution has not “*spent time assessing our general Associate of Arts and Associate of Science programs*.” Acknowledging this gap in its assessment practices, the institution has recently mapped these programs to the ISLOs to be assessed.

With regard to the assessment of co-curricular learning, the report indicates that the Institutional Student Learning Outcomes Committee, working with the Office of the Provost, has established a definition for co-curricular programs as: “*activities that complement course study and provide students another opportunity to directly demonstrate the institutional outcomes*.” Having identified its co-curricular programs, the institution has begun developing procedures for assessing student learning in these areas.

Identify metrics and measures for direct assessment: The report notes that the institution has recently updated the Assessment Guidebook to include language that stresses the need for direct assessment. Here the report provides a bulleted list—shown below--of examples of rubrics employed to assess student artifacts.

- *Accounting used a rubric to assess a capstone project on cost accounting,*
- *Radiologic Technology used the national certification exam test results to analyze how CCD students performed on each of the five sub-sections,*
- *Computed tomography used a rubric to assess student competency in their internship course,*

- *Paralegal assessed students ability to answer an ethical question using the legal memorandum format,*
- *Humanities used an essay to assess how well students can synthesize the course outcomes, and*
- *Food, Nutrition, and Wellness used embedded questions to assess how well students could comprehend their own nutritional intake in relation to national guidelines.*

Collect and analyze data at every level: Here the document cites, specifically, program assessment reports that assess students within individual courses, the data from which are used to “*improve both the course outcomes, and also the program student learning outcome tied to that assessment.*” Examples provided in the report include the following:

- *Visual Arts used the data on the extent to which students were able to analyze and contextualize a piece of art to develop a common work project for students,*
- *Dental Hygiene used a calculus index to measure how well students could identify and remove qualifying subgingival deposits and found that their students were performing within expected ranges,*
- *Psychology used data to devise three hypotheses about their conclusions and to design the next round of assessment to better understand which is accurate,*
- *Numeric thinker and Effective Communicator were assessed at the institutional level,*

Use findings to make improvements across the institution... Here again the report provides a list, in this case enumerating instructional improvements in a range of course and programs, including Chinese and Spanish classes, classes in Communication, Early Childhood Development, and Graphic Design, among others.

In a separate list, the document cites programs/areas that have used the assessment data for “*the improvement of their assessment tools.*” These include examples from the “*Writing Across the Disciplines group*” and the Teaching Learning Center, which has expanded the use of its annual book club’s “*assessment book.*”

Benchmark against other like-institutions: According to the report, the institution used AY2017-2018 to undertake two benchmarking activities, one in which the College used 35 performance metrics from IPEDS/NCES tables to benchmark itself against 10 similar community colleges (“*peer institutions*”) nationally.

REPORT ANALYSIS: The Community College of Denver’s interim report provides substantial evidence indicating that the institution has made appropriate efforts in addressing concerns pertaining to its learning outcomes assessment procedures.

Responding to each of the specific recommendations situated in the Team Report of the College’s 2017 HLC Comprehensive Evaluation, the institution has made progress in

virtually all areas cited in the Team Report. Notable among these improvements are the following:

- The development of an Assessment Plan with both long and short-term goals. The institution-wide system includes the establishment of plans to assess multiple levels of student learning outcomes: Institutional, Program, and Co-curricular.
- In addition, every academic department has been required to submit assessment plans, which are to be reviewed regularly and revised when appropriate.
- Every program submits annual Assessment Reports, using a standard template that is comprehensive in scope. The following is a short excerpt from the template.

Academic Program Assessment Report

Due by October 15

Center: _____

Department: _____

Program: _____

Program Chair: _____

Other Participating Faculty/Instructors: _____

Date: _____

REPORT FROM LAST YEAR

Which Program Student Learning Outcome(s) did you assess last academic year?

If your PSLO last year was an Institutional Outcome, please check the Institutional Outcome(s) tied to this assessment:

- Globally Aware
- Complex Thinker
- Effective Communicator
- Numeric Thinker
- Effective and Ethical User of Technology
- Personally Responsible

To verify the systematic nature of the changes undertaken by the institution, the report includes several timelines, including one noting key points/times in the change process. This bulleted timeline is shown below.

- *Fall 2017 - Summer 2018 – mandate a formal assessment plan from each identified program which did not previously have a plan created.*
- *Fall 2018 – Spring 2019 – SLC and the director for institutional effectiveness will coach programs with weak assessment plans to ensure that they have appropriate program student learning outcomes (PSLOs), well developed curriculum maps, direct measures of assessment, realistic time lines for their assessment practice.*
- *Fall 2019 – mandate updated assessment plans from programs who were identified as having weak plans.*

Indications are that the institution has begun using data derived from its assessment procedures to enact change with regard to its curricula and instructional programming, most notably as it relates to the identification of gaps in student learning in specific areas. The report provides multiple examples of how the faculty has employed these data (see the Report Summary section above). The document also—rightly--makes reference to how some programs have used the assessment results to make procedural changes.

It is evident as well that the institution has begun systematically to employ direct measures of learning across all programs—a critical element in student learning assessment. The report cites several examples of these, noting that program faculty members have begun developing rubrics as a means by which to effect these assessments.

Analysis Concluding Statement: The Community College of Denver has submitted a report that confirms, generally, that the institution has made substantial improvements in its systems/procedures for assessing student learning. The report is clear as to intent and supported with thorough and relevant documentation. The Higher Learning Commission will not require additional reporting on this matter.

However, Core Component 4.B will require considerable and ongoing attention on the part of the College, moving forward. (Please see the Staff Finding section below.) Several of the initiatives and actions described in the report are newly installed or in early stages of implementation. These include, but are not limited to, the institution's work with general education assessment and co-curricular assessment. And, as noted in the timeline cited above, Fall 2019 will be used to strengthen "weak" program assessment plans, a further indication that much of the report content describes work in progress. This is not intended as a criticism. Clearly the institution has been diligent in laying out its future plan in assessment and taking substantive early steps to implement the improved plan.

Nonetheless, the College should assume that the HLC Peer Review team that conducts the institution's AY2020-2021 Open Pathway Review will examine closely the institution's continued progress with regard to student learning assessment.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 4.B

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on assessment of student learning. No further reports are required.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2020 – 2021. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2026 – 2027.