

## **Carl Albert State College, OK**

### **Carl Albert State College - ASL Project**

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Participation Start:	10/25/2017	Participation End:	10/31/2021
Date Completed:	10/31/2021		
Team Lead:	Kelly Kellogg		
Team Member(s):	Marc Willis		
	Bill Carroll		
	Brook Wiersig		
	Kim Hughes		
Primary Mentor(s):	Joan Hawthorne		
Scholar(s):	Susan Murphy		

This Results Report reflects the activity of Carl Albert State College in Assessment Academy. It is not an official document of the Higher Learning Commission.

## Project Update 6

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### Project Update

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Q: Document any key updates and/or changes in the Academy Project scope and timeline as a result of the Third Year Mentor Consultation.

A: The biggest challenge has been the pandemic. Faculty face numerous obstacles on both professional and personal levels. Moving from course level to program level assessment is a task in itself. Many faculty members have expressed how overwhelming life has been and that they are trying to support the new process. That dedication is evident by all programs including general education piloting our new mission-based approach this academic year. The assessment team's goal is to provide guidance and support for simplistic but meaningful assessment.

Q: Looking back at the tasks outlined for the Academy Project following the Midpoint Roundtable, what progress has been made and what tasks remain? What is the plan to address the remaining tasks in the next six months?

A: The project has made great progress. Although only one program participated in the initial pilot last academic year, the rest of the programs worked on creating frameworks: mission statements, curricular goals, and outcomes with performance indicators. All curriculum maps were revised as well. We had hoped to have assessment plans submitted by the end of the spring 2020 term, but the pandemic interrupted progress. At the beginning of the fall 2020 semester, programs and general education created assessment plans and data collection tools.

Currently, we are working on assessing, collecting data, and preparing for annual reporting, which will happen early in the fall 2021 semester. Although the pilots are a scaled down version of assessment, meaning program assessment leaders (PALs) and key faculty members are assessing, all program faculty were involved in the planning and will participate in the annual reporting. We received favorable results from our recent HLC monitoring report over academic and co-curricular assessments. That positive feedback was the evidence needed to assist with the trajectory of our project. Now the programs must find meaning and value in the new methodology in order to increase buy-in. Many factors play into that response, such as measuring what they value and using the appropriate measures and data collection tools. These are components that the assessment team cannot select and/or create for them.

Below is the tentative task timeline for the next six months:

Feb. – May 2021: (1) Continue piloting/assessing based upon assessment plans for academic programs and gen. ed. (2) Utilize the user-friendly assessment software platform to collect findings (3) Continue to provide support

June – July 2021: (1) Prepare for annual assessment meetings and the upcoming academic year

Aug. 2021: (1) Use fall faculty in-service to initiate annual reporting (analysis and plans of action) and assessment plans for 2021-2022

Q: Goal for Next 6 Months

What additional goals has the Academy Team set for the next six months? How does the team plan to achieve these goals?

A: An important goal of the team is providing proactive support/coaching for faculty during this process. We found that clear, step-by-step instructions and deadlines are crucial. Also, reminders, support materials, and encouragement are key. All of these things work toward establishing a systematic, comprehensive process.

Programs and general education were the focus of the first phase of our project. With those in pilot mode, stand-alone certificate programs will begin creating frameworks and maps during the spring 2021 semester.

Finally, the team realizes that changing the campus climate to an evidence-based culture of continuous improvement goes beyond the project, and we are continuously looking for opportunities to convert faculty and staff and to incorporate the philosophy into institutional processes.

Q: What evidence does the Academy Team have that the Academy Project contributing a culture of learning at your institution? If needed, how would your team go about collecting additional evidence?

A: Our recent HLC monitoring report over assessment contains our data story (narrative) and credible evidence of the project's impact upon the entire campus. It was our rite of passage. The report demonstrates how non-academic, co-curricular, and academic assessments became viable processes with performance indicators that support the institution and its mission. Also, it provides evidence that they intersected at certain points to support Criterion 5.D.

Most importantly, faculty and staff are using the terminology, tools, and reporting beyond the scope of the project. It is occurring organically, which means it is slowly becoming meaningful. Evidence can be found in emails, meeting minutes, and collaborations.

Reviewed by **Kelly Kellogg** on 02/23/2021 10:21 AM.

## Consolidated Response

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Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

**A: Joan Hawthorne, Mentor:**

You mention that there are "numerous obstacles" and faculty find it overwhelming. But at the same time, you have made huge progress with rethinking assessment in your academic programs, including general education. Faculty were seeing assessment as something about "my course" when you started this project. Getting to the point where they are now "preparing for annual reporting" on their PROGRAMS is a major accomplishment that required pretty dramatic attitude changes on campus. So you aren't ready to relax but you should definitely feel pretty good about what you've done!

Furthermore, the HLC monitoring report process validates the work you have accomplished. Assessment is never "done" but getting to a point where outside evaluators were favorably impressed by your efforts is an important affirmation.

You have described processes in place that are beginning to institutionalize your progress - a critical step for continuity past the Academy experience. You have pilots, software, support, and annual reporting already underway. You are moving into assessment of certificates. The progress you report includes markers of progress toward the kind of institutionalizing that will sustain assessment over time.

Finally, you mention that "terminology, tools, and reporting" are beginning to find their way into campus efforts beyond the scope of the project. That is an excellent indicator of the progress you have made over the course of this project.

**Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

Joan has really captured the highlights. So much has been accomplished overall, notwithstanding the new challenge of being remote and working through all the issues the pandemic presented.

Piloting approaches in gen ed and at the program level is a major accomplishment as Joan noted. Be sure to share the congrats widely and frequently; ask administration to do the same, giving focus and praise for the work.

I am struck by your comment of providing support for "...simplistic but meaningful assessment." (Applause!) Any time the process can be simplified while still bringing value, you are doing a favor for all involved. You have known for a while that this work does not need to be complex and layered.

And your declaration that becoming a campus that looks at evidence to drive continuous improvement is such an important development---a shift that will have effect beyond the Academy affiliation. Yes, the project may end but it has contributed to a new Carl Albert culture!

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

**A: Joan Hawthorne, Mentor:**

You report many good indicators of progress but you start by sounding a bit disheartened, using words like "overwhelm" and "obstacles." On the one hand, this year certainly makes those words more relevant than ever. On the other hand, that makes me wonder if you are seeing indicators of backsliding or new resistance, in addition to the indicators of progress?? Or maybe this is an indication that it's time to spread the team's work across a larger number of shoulders?

You describe assessment so far as "scaled down" in that assessment leaders and a few key faculty have been carrying the load - but you intend to broaden faculty participation next. I'm wondering what the plan is for that. I gather that faculty generally are familiar with the plans since they participated in developing them, but the assessment work itself will now involve them. And then there's the work of generating (and carrying out) improvement plans. What are your plans for getting faculty on board for these next stages, and then supporting them as they assume greater levels of responsibility?

You are still dealing with ramifications of the pandemic, no doubt, but, at the same time, you want to keep moving forward so you'll achieve Academy goals by the time your participation ends. I'm wondering if the faculty who you've described as overwhelmed by all the stresses and changes will be ready to jump in and accomplish the work you are intending to have done by next fall. Do you have plans for keeping energy high as you wrap up Academy work - and then carrying that energy forward once that's complete?

**Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

Joan's questions point to challenges you might already be discussing with your team.

A complement to her questions about planning might be: How can the work proceed at a reasonable (you define this) pace and with the intention of bringing useful, actionable insight? What cycle is practical and achievable?

Spend some team time discussing the issues Joan has noted and be sure to ask colleagues what support they need to maintain momentum. With maturing expectations of faculty you will likely get new questions/requests for assistance. (Joan makes specific note of this below.)

**Q:** What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

**A: Joan Hawthorne, Mentor:**

Faculty writing first assessment reports often fall short of what was hoped for, but those first steps will likely need to be supported and built on regardless. So one critical task may be to make plans for celebrating and sharing the best work that gets submitted, while also recognizing that you'll need to implement continued support for programs that fall short of the mark. Even the weakest assessment reports are likely to represent significant accomplishment - SOMETHING was done. Supporting the faculty who did that work (took first steps toward what will eventually be better assessment) while continuing to set high expectations for genuinely meaningful assessment will be important.

Of course, the focus when celebrating assessment (or supporting better assessment) needs to continue to be on using findings for improvement. It is easy to think that doing good assessment is the goal, while the real reason for doing good assessment is to USE that assessment. Do you have teaching and learning experts who can partner with you as assessment reports come in and learning needs emerge? It would be really helpful to ensure there is a clear plan for and focus on using that good assessment now that you will be beginning to see it.

You are likely thinking about how all of your work sustains after your Academy participation is complete. And planning for that is a critical need at this stage. You mention faculty needing proactive support and coaching - how will that occur over the long term? Who will continue to read and comment on assessment plans and reports? How will you encourage faculty to update assessment plans occasionally? These long term questions are important for you to be discussing at this point.

**Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

So many important questions to consider from Joan.

Recognizing effort and offering helpful feedback is your next phase. Assume that there will be a need to meet with departments and/or individuals for discussions on what worked (and didn't) and what they are thinking about. Good discussions here will set the tone for next steps.

Maybe not the right time for this next idea but give a thought to how this new perspective , i.e., assessment and improvement can be maintained culturally. Is it possible to have some element of assessment efforts built into new faculty/staff orientation? Some other approach?



Thinking systemically and looking ahead, would the Curriculum Committee (?) be open to having requests for substantial change/new programs include an assessment plan (even an outline of a plan) as a message of the ongoing role of measuring and improving?  
Thinking out loud here...

Plan for the August 2021 In-service (in-person we hope!) and decide what can be accomplished without making the goals too broad. I think this event could be critical not just for the work of the project but more importantly for the path ahead. More immediate though is the work in supporting and coaching colleagues. Keep a pulse on this element and ask regularly what they need from you/the team/other supportive colleagues so that you can tailor guidance.,

Q: What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: **Joan Hawthorne, Mentor:**

You seem to have processes well in hand, and the biggest need may be for continued support as colleagues move from assessment to teaching and learning improvement. There are many excellent books on improving teaching, but the best resource is often a fellow teacher. It might be helpful to line up faculty who are generally regarded as "excellent teachers" so they can be resources for departments that discover learning needs. An outside consultant (outside to their department - not necessarily outside the campus) may not be a better teacher than those within the program, but having that outside perspective can help them see more clearly. Here's an article addressing getting to the improvement stage of the process that I particularly like: [OccasionalPaper23.pdf \(learningoutcomesassessment.org\)](https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/OccasionalPaper23.pdf) (<https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/OccasionalPaper23.pdf>)

**Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

Another good reference article from Joan.

And I heartily agree that a colleague influencing another colleague is more compelling than just about any other effort that can be undertaken administratively or through a committee. Look in-house to strengths and talent that can be shared.

Reviewed by **Susan Murphy** on 03/04/2021 09:35 AM.

## Team Follow-up

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Q: Please read the response provided by your mentor and scholar located in the Consolidated Response sub-accordion above.

Now that you have read their response, would you like to provide answers to any questions posed or address any requests for clarification? If not, please write "N/A" as acknowledgement of receipt of your Consolidated Response.

*Note: Your mentor and scholar will not provide written feedback to any additional information provided here. This space is provided to allow your team to clarify/expand/respond immediately after receiving your mentor's and scholar's feedback on your last update. Any additional information provided will be considered when the mentor and scholar review and respond to your next update.*

A: What are your plans for getting faculty on board for these next stages, and then supporting them as they assume greater levels of responsibility?

Our Program Assessment Leaders Program (PALs) has worked well in the launch of the program outcome assessment pilots. We have set a two year rotation so that other faculty members have a chance to lead.

Do you have plans for keeping energy high as you wrap up Academy work and then carrying that energy forward once that's completed?

We have plans for creative methods to put assessment in everyday structure, such as website posts, emails, contests, and sharing forums. Also, the various assessment committees play an important role in momentum, and pilot faculty will share insight with others. Overall, assessment has to be meaningful to faculty.

How can the work proceed at a reasonable pace and with the intention of bringing useful, actionable insight? What cycle is practical and achievable?

Group program outcome data analysis and reporting from pilot data/process will really tell us our strengths and challenges. Faculty have to work the process to understand it, and for it to be truly faculty owned, they must articulate what is practical and achievable.

Do you have teaching and learning experts who can partner with you as the assessment reports come in and learning needs emerge?

The PALs, division chairs, and committees will play a big role in providing proactive support and coaching.

Who will continue to read and comment on assessment plans and reports?

The academic assessment committee will provide governance and guidance on the process and will vet program frameworks, plans, and reports.

Is it possible to have some element of assessment efforts built into new faculty/staff orientation? Would the curriculum committee be open to having requests for substantial change/new programs include an assessment plan as a message of the ongoing role of measuring and improving?

Dr. Willis would like to have assessment efforts built into new faculty/staff orientation, and he agrees that all new programs should create a program framework and plan. Approving changes based on assessment data is much easier for the curriculum committee to act upon than making uninformed decisions based on whim.

Reviewed by **Kelly Kellogg** on 03/23/2021 04:09 PM.