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## 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

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**Scholar(s):** Susan Murphy

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

## Impact Report Part 2

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### Impact Report Part II

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**Q: Summarize the Academy Team's sustainability plan developed during the Results Forum.**

A: The team's sustainability plan has four components that are core to the infrastructure and culture of continuous improvement:

- **Roles & Responsibilities** – The first component is to officially identify the assessment responsibilities for the different roles on campus from the President to support personnel for institutional ownership and accountability.
- **Comprehensive & Systematic Process** – To ensure a systematic process, we will formalize deadlines of assessment plans and reporting for all assessments.
- **Professional Development & Training** – Training activities will be incorporated around the schedule to reinforce the process, to promote organizational self-discovery, and to advance assessment efforts.
- **Showcasing Assessment & Using Actionable Data** – In order to embrace continuous improvement, it must be positively connected to individual and institutional identity, which will go beyond identifying roles and responsibilities. Therefore, we will utilize strategies that encourage a "culture of risk." Becoming an institution that constantly asks "How can we do this better?" begins with faculty and staff who feel comfortable pursuing that question. Therefore, the institution will provide opportunities for showcasing programs and units that fearlessly assess to obtain actionable data and that fearlessly apply that data for improvements.

**Q: What are the next immediate action steps for continuing the work that the Academy Team launched in the Academy?**

A: The next immediate step is to receive administration's involvement and support. To be successful, the sustainability plan must be accepted and implemented by the institution. Another action step is reinforcing foundational components in all assessments. The team has recognized areas that need additional support, such as curriculum mapping. Through trial and error, we now have a few strategies to strengthen those components this spring. In addition, we must identify metrics to use at progress points to keep our plan moving forward.

**Q: How will the Academy Team ensure the administration's support for these future plans?**

A: After four years in the Academy, we will conduct our first team presentation to the presidential cabinet for collaboration and approval of the plan. It is our opportunity to clearly articulate the support needed to sustain project efforts. Upon acceptance to the Academy, we presumed administrative support, but we underestimated the need to explain and clarify those needs. Now we realize that true success and sustainability of our project will come from institutional ownership, which starts with College leadership.

**Q: What steps need to be taken to keep faculty and staff engaged in ongoing assessment of student learning?**

A: Our plan is built around the premise of keeping faculty and staff engaged in ongoing assessment. Officially identifying responsibilities, setting a systematic schedule with due dates, providing support training throughout the year at strategic times, and showcasing our efforts and use of actionable data are the appropriate steps to build an infrastructure for these endeavors.

Reviewed by **Kelly Kellogg** on 11/05/2021 03:55 PM.

## Consolidated Response

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**Q: Please describe your general impression of the institution's progress in the Academy. Include recognition of significant accomplishments, progress, and/or practices.**

A: As Susan and I noted in response to your previous report, Carl Albert has come a very long way since the beginning of this project! It is great to see the concrete plans, the solid accomplishments, and the considerably greater confidence that have been developed over time.

It is especially satisfying to note the evidence of success that you cite (Impact Report Part I) in response to the question about how you know you are improving student learning through this project. I understand that these accomplishments were largely made possible by curriculum mapping, but the conversations around planning – and then doing – assessment work are a critical component of effective assessment. So it is great to see the curriculum tweaking that came out of that portion of the work.

Among your accomplishments, individual bullet points highlight what's been done for general education and co-curricular assessment. Either of those could have been a major project all on its own. So to have made real progress in those areas while also getting program assessment up and running (across the board) is a highly significant result for Carl Albert.

It's also clear that you are formalizing and systematizing assessment. That is a clear success. Of course, systems are only effective when processes get enacted and people remain engaged (so nothing is ever entirely "done"!).

And the accomplishments cited should be satisfying for your team because they are clear evidence that you have made changes that are contributing to improvements in learning opportunities. Your team has done good work, as have your faculty.

**Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

Bravo! What significant accomplishments have been made that clearly have focus on improving student achievement through faculty engagement in the assessment process. The breadth of your undertakings as Joan noted is impressive and maturing from course to program level assessment is a feat. Your creation of faculty leaders to continue this work and influence others is a bold success.

**Q: Do you have any particular concerns about the work they have done?**

A: I'll note two things. The first is a concern in response to your comments about getting administrative leadership on board. You are absolutely right about the importance of that for multiple reasons, not least is that faculty will sense whether assessment in an administrative priority – and, if not, it will quickly become a non-priority for faculty as well. So you do indeed want to cultivate that support and perhaps there are key administrators (provost, dean?) who can be your advocates inside meetings where team members are not present.

And the second point is more of a comment than a concern: I am not clear on how you manage the PALS program (which I know is important to your sustainability plans). You mention rotating the faculty serving in the program so that more faculty get the chance to fill that role, and I understand the value in that because certainly the PALS faculty themselves learn through their mentorship work, plus each participant will bring their own strengths to the role. On the other hand, it's typical to find that some faculty really understand assessment and serve as effective mentors – but not everyone has those strengths. I'm assuming there must be some sort of selection and training process that ensures your PALS faculty will continue to represent the best of your institution's skills and knowledge regarding assessment. Ensuring effective oversight/management for this program will be a priority to maintain program quality.

Which makes me think: you mention wanting to incorporate ongoing faculty development around assessment—for faculty generally, as well as PALS faculty. Perhaps you could incorporate faculty development for both teaching and assessment, since it is the effect assessment has on teaching and learning that makes it worthwhile to faculty.

**Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

My idea/advice may not be a fit but one of the ways that some institutions try to message the importance of assessment is by including it in hiring interviews, job descriptions and annual evaluations and more (think recognition and rewards). I offer that just to underscore that the "message" of assessment isn't just the semester by semester or annual involvement in the process, it is the cultural message from many directions that doing this work is simply SOP for Carl Albert. That's how cultures come to be.

**Q: In your judgment, is the institution prepared to sustain its assessment efforts after it leaves the Academy? Do you have any specific recommendations to help it sustain its efforts?**

A: I believe you have already started sharing results and findings when you're able, but that is likely to prove a huge part of sustainability. Your first Impact Report mentions wanting to get "heel draggers" on board, but the truth is that there will always be individuals and programs that drive you crazy. The most effective strategy for moving them forward may be ignoring them (at least temporarily and to some degree) and focusing on the really good work that starts to come out from other programs. And that is clearly your intention as it is one of your four elements of the sustainability plan. By all means, tell those success stories publicly, celebrate the people doing that assessment, make sure everyone on campus sees how those efforts yielded positive results. Heel draggers may see the satisfying results in other programs (and the accolades faculty in those programs receive) and decide to get on board. And, in the meantime, the success stories serve as motivation and models for those who genuinely want to learn. Keep the focus on the successes.

Your aim to create a culture of risk is especially useful when pursuing sustainability---it's great to reward campus for trying things, even recognizing that some will not be the success hoped for.

You also mention the importance of actionable data and you are absolutely right about the need to collect such data as a critical component of assessment. Moving from actionable data to action is also critical and can be surprisingly tricky. Once a learning gap is identified, you may find that program faculty are full of reasons why improvements are not possible ("what's needed is money for us to hire another faculty member," or "yeah, if only we didn't have such large teaching loads..."). Or they may see the needs but honestly not have any idea how to fix problems they've discovered. In most cases, providing faculty with time to work together (curriculum retreat funding??), perhaps with facilitation from a PALS member, can prove helpful – faculty are smart people who are pretty good at problem-solving if they have time to focus together.

That said, it does indeed appear that Carl Albert has made tremendous project and has a good plan for sustainability in place.

### **Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

Joan has hit on it! Time, time, time. Plan for it and carve out the requirements for training (and re-training), conversations, discussion, debate, and exploring tools. Time with colleagues to consider ideas, problems, data, learning barriers, etc., is the real undergirding of assessment. Consider even now how the next year or two might map out given some reliable time frames when faculty are together for development.

**Q: Please note any other observations or recommendations that you wish to share.**

A: You note that you haven't found many models for your work within two-year colleges, which suggests that there is an opportunity for you share your project and processes with other institutions. You may want to consider this as yet another means of celebrating the accomplishments of your institution and faculty.

**Susan Murphy, Scholar:**

If you can fit it in-----I want to think that a search of the Sparq platform could help you find useful models for future work. Sparq houses so many resources but it will take some time to search and discover. And as Joan stated, look around other state or regional institutions, connect with colleagues from colleges you respect.

You have done fine work to be proud of. Congrats to the team and participating colleagues.

Reviewed by **Susan Murphy** on 11/28/2021 08:05 PM.