Carl Albert State College, OK
Carl Albert State College - ASL Project

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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Primary Mentor(s): Joan Hawthorne

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.

Post-Academy Progress Update

Post Academy Progress Report

Q: Summarize your institution's assessment efforts since completing the Assessment Academy 6 months ago.

A: The assessment team presented their sustainability plan to the Executive Cabinet on November 29, 2021. The team covered the four components:

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Comprehensive and Systematic Process
- Professional Development and Training
- Showcasing Assessment

The team hopes that sustainability of assessment efforts will be a part of the institutional strategic plan related to establishing a culture of continuous improvement. The assessment team members have agreed to continue as a team for the next three years to keep moving the efforts forward and to serve as mentors.

In spring 2022, the assessment team created a climate of assessment survey to gather feedback after three years of implementing and advancing assessment efforts on campus. The survey gauged four components related to the sustainability plan:

- Process Transition – What change model zone do administration, faculty, and staff members who are in charge of assessment in their units think they and the institution as a whole are in at this point?
- Support of Assessment – How do they perceive the level of acceptance of assessment efforts personally and for each group: institution, faculty, and staff?
- Purpose of Assessment – Do they understand the purpose of assessment?
- Resources – Do they have the support and training needed?

A total of 54 out of 76 administrators, faculty, and staff completed the survey. The survey utilized Franklin Covey's "Change Model" to conceptualize the process transition:

- Zone of Disruption – Change always creates a level of disruption when people are trying to understand and learn something new.
- Zone of Adoption – After the point of decision to accept or reject the change, this period is adapting to the new process.
- Zone of Innovation – This zone is where the benefits of change begin.

A key area of investigation was faculty and staff's perception of acceptance and implementation of the new assessments.

- When asked what zone in the change model they feel the institution is in at this point, 42% stated innovation and 47% stated adoption.
- When asked what zone they personally are in at this point, 59% stated innovation with 32% adoption.

The responses identified three types of barriers: "change/COVID fatigue," "still learning/almost there," and a few still "lost in the process."

When asked to explain the resource rating and to give us feedback on improvements, most comments were positive. However, the following were identified as challenges: "communication," "constant change," "lack of leadership," and "frustration." The team is currently compiling analysis and plans of action based on the data to present to the presidential cabinet.

Q: Have you experienced any challenges or roadblocks in implementing the sustainability plan developed at the Results Forum?

A: Although administration approved the plan, the components haven't been officially incorporated. As research supports, efforts become centralized to small groups if it is isn't a unified effort beginning with institutional support and key leadership. This is the main reason the team is pushing for the sustainability plan to become part of the institutional strategic plan. Also, the college has an assurance argument due in October and a comprehensive visit following. Therefore, we really haven't had a moment to relax in our efforts. As the survey identified, the hard push by the team to implement basically four types of assessments within a three year period to make up for the thirty year deficit was an obstacle in itself. However, it needed to happen. As the team was reaching the end of the project and working on the sustainability plan, foundational elements of successfully launching assessment endeavors emerged. In hindsight, these critical elements should have been considered and incorporated from the beginning, and we found research that supported our mere mortal discoveries. The literature spoke to the life we had led and the strengths and struggles of our project. We can only learn from our journey and keep being the "continuous improvement evangelists."

Q: Do you have any additional updates, questions, or concerns that you would like to share with your mentor and scholar for feedback and guidance?

A: During the 2021 – 2022 academic year, Phi Theta Kappa students decided to use the learning experience of creating and conducting the fall 2021 "Viking Network" to assess the co-curricular student learning outcome – "Students will work effectively within a team structure." This student learning outcome (SLO) falls under the Co-Curricular Learning Dimension IV – Leadership and Teamwork (co-curricular framework). Next, they created a non-academic plan to assess the effectiveness of the event in connecting high school seniors and current students to major programs of interest. During this project, an ambitious English Composition II class assisted with the development and use of tools to gather and evaluate the data to assess the outcomes. Both groups worked together on reporting their findings and recommended plans of action. At the end of the spring 2022 semester, student representatives from the project presented their assessment journey to co-curricular and non-academic unit leaders as a testament to the integrative nature of these assessments supporting student success.

During the presentation, the students explained their assessment process and shared the questions of inquiry that directed their assessments. Student dialogue revealed the organic association of co-curricular "real world" opportunities with classroom learning. Also, their inquiry of the effectiveness of their project meeting their intended outcome supports the climate shift toward establishing a culture of continuous improvement. The representatives emphasized their request that the institution utilizes their assessment data and recommendations for improvements. In addition, they encouraged faculty and staff to apply their teamwork rubric and expertise in future endeavors.

This student experience is directly related to the support of key field experts and the College's participation in the Academy. These students embraced assessment and found its worth quickly, whereas faculty and staff are still moving through the "adoption" stage, which equates to growing pains in a very challenging environment for higher education in general. The team's hope and ultimate goal is that the Academy project and sustainability plan become the foundation for a true culture shift toward data-informed improvements for student learning and operations.

Reviewed by **Kelly Kellogg** on 07/11/2022 01:23 PM.

Consolidated Response

Q: **What are some critical things to which the institution should consider as they move forward with their work in improve assessment and student learning?**

A: **Joan Hawthorne, Mentor:**

Before addressing "critical things to…consider," let me reiterate what both Susan and I said following your last report: your team has done really good work on this Academy project, and I remain persuaded that you are well-positioned to sustain your progress.

Faculty, staff, and administrators have told you via the survey that fatigue (from change generally as well as Covid specifically) and an on-going need for learning continue to be barriers to assessment progress at Carl Albert. You may not be able to address the fatigue factor—and my guess is that your administrators recognize that as a challenge, not only to assessment but to participation in any campus-wide initiative. But your plans to showcase successful assessment projects and sustain faculty development around assessment are clearly critical for addressing the need for learning – which is a barrier within your control. Even fatigue may diminish somewhat once assessment feels familiar and "built-in" rather than being perceived as an add-on. So, your plans to continue to provide vital faculty support may pay off in multiple ways.

It sounds like the four bullet points for sustainability addressed in your final report align quite well with the comments you received about areas for improvement. Keeping those comments in the forefront of your minds as you work on the plan you've outlined will be important. In response to the comment about the need for communication, e.g., you might ask yourselves (1) how you're providing information about assessment processes to those who work on data collection and reporting and (2) what strategies for showcasing assessment successes are most likely to reach people who could benefit from the examples.

Susan Murphy, Scholar:

Joan and I see that your Academy work was significant and matured substantially over the years of the project--and continues to!

Including this work in the college's Strategic Plan absolutely would give it an enviable profile, one that we endorse. Of course, this isn't the only way to keep the work in front of colleagues, but it does lend clout. (See Joan's notes below.) If this opportunity doesn't materialize, impress upon all Cabinet members the importance of their role in this work; any time that they can promote this work or even better, recognize and reward it, the more likely their comments will strengthen and support the sense of campus commitment to continuous improvement.

The survey gave you insight on the in-the-trenches reactions to change and you are already planning to tackle the issues the survey identified as barriers. I can only underscore that the work ahead requires you to understand more specifics on these issues. The issues could stay nebulous if you can't pin down specifics. From the outside I have seen a great deal of planned and executed communication and leadership but internal users may need more or different information or different delivery/training, or additional leaders to send the message. Keep at it to understand colleague perceptions and needs; they are at the core of success for this work.

Q: Feedback and Guidance

Provide any additional feedback and guidance for the Academy team.

A: **Joan Hawthorne, Mentor:**

Your team clearly has a strong commitment to this project given that members of the Academy team have agreed to continue their efforts as you go forward. Having that kind of commitment bodes well for the future – so congratulations on that! Over time, you'll need to consider how you'll maintain continuity of leadership while cycling new people into that area of responsibility

It sounds like your research on change in higher education has been reassuring – you are not alone in the process you're going through. And as you have concluded, the institutional commitment signified by building assessment into the new strategic plan would be very helpful. I'm not sure of the strategic planning timeline, but (just in case sustaining assessment isn't well-incorporated into the final version of that plan) you may want to also consider other avenues of institutionalizing ongoing support. E.g., is there an institutional leader who would be interested in joining your committee---his/her primary responsibility could be advocating for assessment during administrative meetings. Could you build assessment expectations into processes for hiring (as Susan suggested earlier) or merit/promotion?

The student co-curricular project sounds great – and student voices are often heard with a unique urgency. It's good to see that you already highlighted their work with a special presentation. Are there opportunities to build further on this project, maybe with a new student assessment project or perhaps with a written (or videoed?) report that could be highlighted on your website?

Susan Murphy, Scholar:

The student co-curricular project is absolutely impressive; what a model to have available for so many reasons.Consider submitting it as a presentation for the next HLC Conference.

Find more models among colleagues that allow you to showcase success. The success that fellow colleagues experience can serve as compelling evidence to convince others to experiment or just stick with it.

Consider what might be possible with any statewide higher ed meetings. Could assessment enjoy a place on those agendas?

Good to read your positive posting; best wishes for continued success.

Reviewed by **Susan Murphy** on 07/28/2022 04:48 PM.