



Assessment of Student Learning
2015 Annual Report

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Introduction

During the implementation of *Destination 2015*, PCC's multi-year strategic plan, all college employees had regular opportunities to identify and report successes and continuing challenges of meeting the college's long-term strategic imperatives. Outcomes were organized and tabulated by PCC's Director of Institutional Research, and are accessible in an electronic folder on PCC's U:Drive. As 2015 drew to a close, a new strategic planning process called *Destination 2022* began. Faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community members were welcomed as participants in the process, each contributing their perspectives about the best way forward during this time of rapid change and budgetary challenges for higher education.

Effective student learning is the core reason for Pueblo Community College's existence. Accordingly, one strategic imperative that has been a central component of both the retiring strategic plan and the new one just developed has been effective Assessment of Student Learning (ASL) processes. PCC's ASL processes underwent a significant transition during 2015. In the spring of 2015, two of PCC's academic divisions made the determination to adopt a calendar year cycle for assessment of student learning. The third academic division came on board with the same decision during the fall of 2015. This change in the assessment cycle was the first of several changes that began in 2015, but will impact all aspects of assessment of student learning during the foreseeable future.

Three interrelated projects that have far-reaching impact on Assessment of Student Learning at PCC were initiated during 2015, although major implementation will occur in 2016

and beyond. First, both the assessment leadership, the faculty, and the administration have gained a much clearer understanding of how institutional level assessment should be properly conducted. Steps are planned for 2016, which will change and clarify the institutional assessment of student learning processes, improve consistency by identifying one or more common rubrics to use as assessment tools across the institution, and broaden the scope of assessment data to include data from multiple years so that trend data can be effectively used for institutional quality improvement. Additionally, at the request of PCC's Chief Academic Officer, the ASL Committee reviewed three commercial assessment programs in consideration for possible adoption by the college. The committee determined that one of these programs could effectively move PCC's assessment efforts to the next level, and a recommendation for purchase was made in early 2016. Finally, the ASL committee leads and chair began the process of reviewing and updating PCC's General Education Learning Outcomes, formerly called "PCC's Core Competencies."

Assessment of Student Learning Process

The academic divisions of the college have, over the last two decades, been increasingly diligent in designing, developing, and refining assessment of student learning processes. PCC's assessment of student learning process has gone through many years of incremental change; however, the most significant changes have occurred during the past four academic years. At the beginning of those four years, the model of assessment leadership changed significantly. Prior to that time, leadership roles had been with the committee itself, the Vice President of Learning, or with a part-time coordinator. For 2012-13, the academic divisions adopted the practice of designating one "Lead" person from each division to coordinate and facilitate both assessment

planning and assessment reporting within the respective divisions. Consequently, the committee's *Operating Procedures* underwent a substantial revision. The current model has worked effectively at PCC, and has also undergone a continual evolution since that time. As "Faculty Leads" have grown more accustomed to the processes that work best within their divisions, the expectations from PCC's accrediting body AQIP have also become more and more extensive.

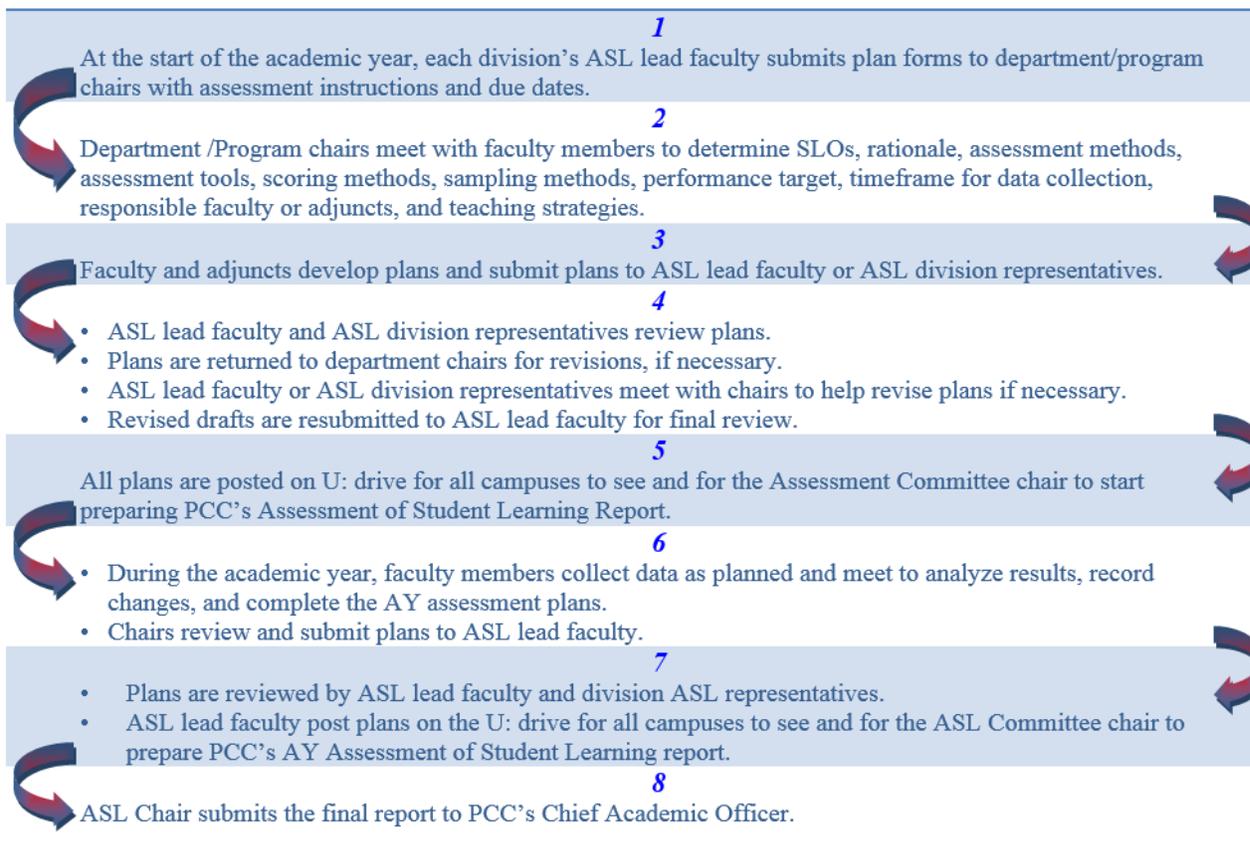
Department Chairs and faculty lead the Assessment of Student Learning process within their departments. They identify desired student learning outcomes (SLOs), develop strategies to deliver the needed instruction, collect relevant data, and evaluate student outcomes. These outcomes are then analyzed, interpreted, and reported using the standard forms available to all faculty. Based on assessment results, departmental faculty may then determine how to best apply the information so that courses, instruction, and/or programs can be enhanced or improved. At times this may mean the assessment tools or instructional strategies need modification. Alternatively, departments may determine that the instruction provided has achieved the desired goal, and thus decide to close the assessment loop.

The established processes for Assessment of Student Learning at PCC are likely to undergo additional changes and modifications during 2016 as the faculty further develop and refine processes and tools to effectively conduct course, program, and institutional-level assessment. Additionally, needed changes will be forthcoming that will enable integration and/or adaptation of established processes with a commercial assessment program which has been recommended for purchase and implementation in 2016.

The Assessment of Student Learning process as practiced at Pueblo Community College during 2015 is illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1

Assessment of Student Learning Process



AQIP Systems Portfolio

In anticipation of a scheduled accreditation visit from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) scheduled for Spring of 2017, a new systems portfolio was prepared and submitted during the Spring of 2015. The portfolio compilation called for complex data and detail with a strict limit of sixty pages. Preparation involved several writing teams, each consisting of faculty, administrators, and staff. Assessment of Student Learning committee members were directly involved with preparing the summary of current practices and the responses to previous feedback pertaining to *Category 1: Helping Students Learn*. The team included not only ASL committee

members, but also other faculty, and administrators who collaborated to write, edit, and revise the *Category 1* section. Other sections of the report were completed by other writing teams from various job titles and disciplines.

For the past several years, SLOs in every discipline were aligned with one of the PCC “Core Competencies” (General Education Learning Outcomes), with the general understanding (at that time) that alignment demonstrated institutional assessment. During the compilation of the *Systems Portfolio* for HLC, the *Category 1* Team found that locating and compiling the requested long-term data was nearly impossible. Pouring over electronic and paper reports, which – even when needed information could be found – proved to be extremely cumbersome. Rarely was any data compiled in a single place or in a consistent format so that it could be useful for comparison across years or for long-term analysis. Therefore, identifying longitudinal or trend data was mostly impossible. The *Category 1* Team realized that while the faculty commitment and standard processes were addressing assessment requirements of courses and programs intra-departmentally, better understanding, effective tools, and consistent processes were needed for a broader view of institutional results.

Institutional Assessment

Fall 2015 marked a new beginning point in developing PCC’s institutional assessment efforts. This effort became a college priority. Faculty professional development day held on August 21, 2015, was a first step in the institutional level assessment of *critical thinking*. After a general morning session for all faculty, the afternoon featured break-out sessions for each department (with some smaller departments combined with colleagues in related fields). The *AAC&U Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric* was distributed to each department. In the session,

faculty were asked to provide feedback that addressed the following: (1) *What does “capstone” critical thinking look like for your program?* (and) (2) *Examine the rubric again and DISCUSS ANY CHANGES you would make to the criteria/definitions on the rubric so that it more appropriately reflects the efforts of your program.* Twenty departments submitted feedback, which yielded substantive information about both topics; however, since the data were reported anecdotally, they were difficult to categorize or quantify objectively.

Later in the Fall of 2015, the feedback came back from HLC about PCC’s *Systems Portfolio* (the report submitted the previous spring). The HLC reviewers provided the following comment about PCC’s “Common Learning Outcomes”:

PCC is continuing to improve its assessment process, which integrates the three levels of assessment: course, program, and institutional (GELO). PCC has the opportunity to more thoroughly evaluate processes for assessment of student learning, comparing the processes they use to those used at institutions with better established processes. PCC might benefit from developing a standardized process to assess GELOS across the curriculum that is not dependent on program-level outcomes but relies on stand-alone measures, such as institutionally created rubrics or other measures. This would give the institution a consistent way to assess student learning attainment of the GELOs. From this evaluation PCC may select a few improvements to move their processes from reacting and systematic toward alignment or integration.

Clearly, the Higher Learning Commission expected significant improvements. Feedback about PCC’s program-level assessment was a bit more encouraging, but, again, the prevailing message was that the HLC team recommended improvements.

In an institution-wide commitment to address the HLC team’s concerns and in the spirit of continuous quality improvement, the faculty agreed as a group that “critical thinking” was an overarching priority for all courses. All programs and courses were urged to use the AAC&U Critical Thinking VALUE rubric (as is) to evaluate some aspect of critical thinking in their courses and/or programs. A reporting template within D2L was developed by PCC’s CTEAL Coordinator and the Director of Institution Research to collect results. The results were compiled into a spreadsheet. While many faculty and program leaders struggled with using the one rubric to evaluate the wide range critical thinking tasks found in courses and programs offered at PCC, nevertheless, they put forth remarkable effort and accomplished the task.

These Critical Thinking Outcomes were compiled by PCC’s Director of Institutional Research. Data were assessed within departments and entered into a raw data reporting form imbedded in each faculty’s D2L course home. According to the IR findings, at least 518 individual students were assessed, and at least 26 of them were assessed multiple times. The duplicated count of students who were assessed was slightly more than twice that number at 1,107. Students from the Pueblo, Fremont, Durango, and Mancos campuses were included in these numbers.

Table 2 provides the results of data collected on *Critical Thinking* during Fall 2015:

Table 2

Course Level	Students	Criterion 1	Criterion 2	Criterion 3	Criterion 4	Criterion 5	Overall
Developmental “0” Level	132 dup. 88+ undup.	2.35	2.78	1.00	2.21	1.97	1.74
UG Year 1 “100” Level	990 dup. 368+undup.	1.93	1.93	1.48	1.63	1.73	1.73
UG Year 2 “200” Level	831 dup. 102+ undup.	1.94	1.76	1.82	1.56	1.41	1.70

Common Learning Outcomes

The current common learning outcomes were developed in 1998 by the Assessment of Student Learning Committee. These “core” competencies are reviewed periodically, and minor revisions have been made over the years. For 2015, these Core Competencies were as follows:

- **Effective Communication:** Students should be able to read, write, speak, and listen.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students should be able to analyze and evaluate data, synthesize information, think creatively, make judgments, make decisions, and solve problems.
- **Information and Communication Technology Literacy:** Students should be able to identify, locate, interpret, evaluate, synthesize, present, and communicate accurate and reliable information.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** Students should be able to function effectively and appropriately in social and professional situations and settings.
- **Global and Cultural Perspectives:** Students should understand the cultural, social, historical, political, technological, linguistic, and economic interconnectedness of our world in order to interact respectfully and productively with citizens of other nations.

During 2015, the Assessment of Student Learning Committee determined that these competencies were due for review and revision. This process is underway at the time this report is being prepared. The proposed new competencies are as follows: (1) Communication, (2) Critical Thinking & Information Literacy, (3) Quantitative & Scientific Literacy, (4) Technological Literacy, (5) Global, Cultural, and Civic Knowledge, and (6) Professionalism & Teamwork. Detailed descriptions are in draft form as of this writing and will be reviewed by Faculty Council and the full faculty in Fall of 2016.

Reporting

Assessment plans and reports from the past six years can be accessed by all PCC administrators, instructors, and staff through an internal college network drive ([U:\Assessment of Student Learning](#)). As previously noted, in 2015 the three academic divisions at PCC elected to change the assessment cycle from the academic year to the calendar year. The main purpose of the change was to expedite annual assessment reporting so that it worked more effectively for all three divisions. Assessment data from Spring 2015 appears on the 2014-15 report, thus, this report bridges only the transition and contains assessment information from Fall 2015 only. Upon completion and approval by the Assessment of Student Learning Committee, the final version of this report will be posted on the U Drive. [U:\Assessment of Student Learning\Assessment of Student Learning 2015-Transition](#). Upon administrative approval, the report will also be accessible through the PCC portal.

Conclusion

During the Fall 2015 assessment cycle, thirty departments and/or programs from the three academic divisions participated in Assessment of Student Learning. Each Assessment Faculty Lead compiled and summarized assessment results from his or her division. Each Lead selected the format and included information that seemed to best summarize the assessment efforts and outcomes of his/her respective division. An overview of assessment participation and results by division is illustrated briefly in Table 3:

Table 3

Academic Division	Departments/ Programs	#SLOs	# Closed Loop	Notes
Arts & Sciences	7	56	31	
Business & Advanced Technology	9	26	5	Although plans with SLOs were submitted, results were not reported in time for inclusion in this report for three programs: ACC, MAN, and OFA.
Health & Public Safety	14	25	3	Although a plan with SLOs was submitted, results were not reported for RCA in time for inclusion in this report.
Overall	30	107	39	

The individual division reports are included as appendices to this document.

- See Appendix B – Arts & Sciences Division Report.
- See Appendix C – Business & Advance Technology Report.
- See Appendix D – Health & Public Safety Report.

Additional inquiries concerning PCC’s Assessment of Student Learning processes and/or results may be directed to Mr. Corey Shilling, Director of Institutional Effectiveness at 719-549-3195 or <mailto:Corey.Shilling@pueblocc.edu>.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Based upon feedback given to the ASL committee and leads and to the CTEAL committee, some recommendations for improvement of Assessment of Student Learning at PCC include:

1. Update the PCC General Education Competencies. (Underway at the time of this report.)
2. Further develop and refine assessment processes for the 2016 assessment cycle, especially regarding institutional-level assessment.
3. Develop an implementation plan for the Elumen commercial assessment program. This will also necessitate a comprehensive faculty training program.
4. Finalize updated GELOs; develop or select common rubrics (such as the AACU Value Rubrics and or CDHE adaptations) to assess selected GELOs; train faculty to use them with accuracy and consistency.
5. Create an assessment handbook as a resource for faculty. (Underway at the time of this report.)
6. Provide more guidance to faculty on the need to provide an explicit rationale for their SLOs as well as an explanation of how the rationale ties to prior assessment results. Also, faculty need a better understanding of when and why to close the assessment loop.
7. Continue to improve full ASL participation of all faculty and instructors across the institution, with particular emphasis on branch campus involvement.