



Action Project Updates **College-wide Assessment of** **MCTC's General Education Core Competency in Critical Thinking** **September 2009**

Question #1: Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

2008-09 was the third year in which the focus of this ongoing Action Project was on Critical Thinking (CT) instead of Communication, with four goals:

GOAL 1: Embed the assessment of CT skills into 30 courses.

RESULT: 28 instructors from 18 fields (10 Liberal Arts and 8 Career/Technical) attended training sessions and assessed 823 student performances in CT in 30 different courses, with 78% of the scored samples being rated at College Level or higher (surpassing the benchmark of 75%).

GOAL 2: For the second year in a row administer a nationally-normed CT assessment to a representative sample of sophomore level students.

RESULT: After many difficulties and great expense with the first administration in 2007-08 (in which MCTC's mean was slightly above the national), the CAAP test was NOT repeated this year.

GOAL 3: Continue instructor-training in CT skills.

RESULT: Dozens of instructors attended multiple Faculty Development sessions held throughout the year.

GOAL 4: Continue working through Academic Council (AC) to assist instructors in developing CT assessment tools for their courses.

RESULT: All AC approved courses that indicated they addressed CT included a plan for assessing student learning. Accomplishments outside of the explicit goals included the fact that MCTC was selected to participate in a Lumina-funded consortium organized by Alverno College called Innovation and Inquiry for Student Learning.

In order to prepare for the next Action Project on Social Responsibility (SR), a group of faculty and staff, the SR Caucus, met monthly to set goals for the three-year focus on that competency. The work of the Caucus resulted in a set of activities for faculty and staff at the two Opening Days in Fall, 2009, focused on "The Engaged Campus."

Additionally, a team from MCTC will present at the Fall AAC& U conference: "Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility."

Also, during their Quality Checkup visit in Spring, 2009, the Site Team commended MCTC for its assessment efforts.

Finally, a team from MCTC presented a session on assessment at the HLC Annual Meeting in Spring, 2009.

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Question #2: Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

This project involved many people. As noted above, the embedding effort involved 28 instructors and 843 students. The Faculty Development Committee provided training in CT practices to dozens of attending instructors. The Academic Council, consisting of 10 faculty, 5 administrators and several staff members, continued to work with faculty to ensure that CT is taught and assessed in new and altered courses and programs. The Social Responsibility Caucus, which consisted of 15 faculty and staff members from across the curriculum, met once a month to engage in dialogue about social responsibility and to plan for assessment activities, which involved ALL the staff and faculty in discussions in the Opening Days of Fall 2009.

Question #3: Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

2009-10 marks the first of three years in which MCTC will focus its efforts at assessing general education competencies to Social Responsibility. In 2008-09 the SR Caucus laid out its goals for this year:

- (1) conduct Opening Days activities,
- (2) distribute a survey on SR activities and perceptions to faculty and staff,
- (3) embed SR assessments into 10 courses,
- (4) identify a nationally-normed instrument to assess students' SR skills, (5) conduct Faculty, Development sessions on SR,
- (6) work with the AC on SR, a
- (7) revise the existing SR competency language, and
- (8) increase MCTC's impact regionally and nationally.

Question #4: Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

The CT and SR phases of the Action Project built on several effective practices initially implemented in the Communication phase.

First, this effort has been faculty-led, -driven and -implemented: assessment coordinators in charge are members of the faculty; training is provided by faculty for faculty; participants in the embedding are volunteer faculty members.

Second, intentional, specific, and explicit processes that involve stakeholders from across campus have been established and followed: AC forms require general education assessment plans; reporting mechanisms allow for the collection and aggregation of data; and existing channels have been connected to achieve goals, for example, the conflation of assessment and faculty development efforts.

Finally, the Project reflects the maxim that MCTC funds what it values and values what it fund, for considerable administrative support has been given to this effort: assessment co-coordinators receive



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significant release time; faculty embedding critical thinking assessments or delivering faculty development sessions receive stipends for their efforts; nationally-normed tests are paid for; responsibilities for these efforts have been identified in specific processes and job descriptions.

Question #5: What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

The greatest challenge is the administration of nationally-normed tests:

- How to identify a test that reflects what we teach?
- How to recruit and motivate students to take the tests?
- How to motivate participating students to take the test SERIOUSLY?
- How to fund the project?
- When, how and where to administer in a secure fashion a test which may be pencil-and-paper? In fact, despite repeated efforts to attract students, in 2007-08 we were, in the end, only able to get 166 students, although our goal had been 200.

These challenges proved so great that MCTC determined NOT to repeat the CAAP in 2008-09, although we had originally hoped to do so to gain some trend data. We are particularly concerned about the possibility of finding a national instrument that can provide us with comparable data for Social Responsibility, especially since faculty are interested in assessing not only attitudes and beliefs in this area, but skills and competencies

Question #6: If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

If you are aware of any national tests that assess students' SKILLS and COMPETENCIES (not only attitudes, habits, beliefs and emotions) in social responsibility, please let us know.