



Higher Learning Commission
A commission of the North Central Association

EXPLORING DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS

*A Descriptive Analysis of the Quality
Initiative Demonstration Project to
Test the Lumina Foundation's Degree
Qualifications Profile*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FROM MAY 2011 THROUGH AUGUST 2013, the Higher Learning Commission, the largest U.S. regional accreditor, collaborated with 23 diverse colleges and universities to test and provide commentary on the beta version of the Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). The collaboration also provided a forum for refining the Commission's new accrediting model, Pathways, specifically experimenting with a Commission-facilitated, collaborative version of the Open Pathway's required Quality Initiative. The 23 participating institutions ranged from community and technical colleges to research universities. Both public and private colleges participated; college enrollments ranged from fewer than 1,000 to more than 15,000. This executive summary provides an overview of this Lumina-funded project.

During the two-year project, the institutions met as a cohort four times, participated in Commission-facilitated webinars, phone interviews, the online collaborative network, surveys, and face-to-face closing interviews, and submitted a final report. These activities were designed to give the institutions opportunities to share their experiences, receive peer and Commission commentary on their DQP efforts, and provide the Commission with findings, ideas, and key issues on both the Open Pathway Quality Initiative process and the effectiveness of the DQP as a degree framework for higher education. Five times over the course of the project, the Commission provided Lumina with critical information on the work of the institutions and the efficacy of the DQP. The findings in the full report constitute the review of all documents related to the project and a qualitative analysis of the project's final reports and interview transcripts.

PROJECT GOALS

The project's goals were (a) to engage diverse institutions in testing and experimenting with the DQP so as to discern its meaningfulness and usefulness as a degree framework, (b) to provide candid commentary to Lumina on the continued development of the DQP and its application in diverse educational environments, and (c) to develop and refine a collaborative model of the

Commission-facilitated Quality Initiative option of the new Open Pathway accreditation process.

To test the DQP, each institution proposed its own strategies for experimenting with some or all of the Profile's proposed outcomes in conjunction with one or more educational programs. The institutional projects varied and most institutions had multiple goals, yet many of the goals were shared. Following are the 14 institutional goals articulated across all institutional projects. The number in parentheses after a listed goal indicates how many institutions share that goal:

- Perform gap analysis/curriculum mapping (23)
- Enhance assessment processes (14)
- Enhance existing curricular and co-curricular processes and initiatives (5)
- Review/enhance general education (5)
- Promote integration across the curriculum (5)
- Provide a voice in shaping the DQP (4)
- Increase faculty focus on student learning (4)
- Promote faculty development (4)
- Identify gaps in DQP (3)
- Identify the degree of external relevance of DQP, e.g., employer engagement (3)

- Participate in national conversations of significance to higher education (3)
- Hone the institutional mission (2)
- Enhance program review (2)
- Identify ways to harmonize outcomes with other accrediting bodies (1)

RESOURCES USED

The resources used by institutions in this process were extensive. The most significant resource was human capital. Faculty members were involved at all levels of the planning and implementation of the projects. Faculty members participated in curriculum mapping, worked on committees and workshops, joined focus groups, attended multiple meetings, and held faculty forums. Administrators from all areas and at all levels were involved across the projects. Administrative areas identified as actively participating in the projects included academic affairs, student affairs, finance, institutional research, assessment, library, general education, honors programs, career counseling, leadership centers, and student success. In addition to specific individuals, institutional committees were also actively engaged across the institutions. Some of the committees that were identified as participating were curriculum, general education, assessment, academic affairs, institutional effectiveness, budget, graduate, and the president's cabinet. Finally, 30% of the institutions directly involved students, and 30% involved external stakeholders.

In addition to human resources, institutions reported financial commitments to support faculty and staff participation as well as the use of institutional processes and tools, such as survey support, rubric development, focus groups, and development of electronic data collection systems. Although the Commission did not require institutions to submit a final budget, most institutions indicated that in terms of time, technology, financial, and other resources, they spent at least \$25,000–\$30,000, and many institutions reported spending much more than that.

RESULTS

In direct relationship to the project goals, the Commission and participating institutions produced three types of results.

Institution-specific Results

In conducting their projects, institutions documented results related to their specific goals—i.e., accomplishments and impact on teaching, learning, curricula, assessment, program evaluation, and other elements of the educational enterprise. Naturally, the results reported by the institutions varied. However, every institution used some form of a curriculum mapping process as a tool for data gathering around the DQP areas of learning. Whether used with external constituents or to look at general education, all programs, select programs, or co-curricular programs, curriculum mapping was identified as being an important data-gathering process. The application of the curriculum map findings resulted in general education revision/enhancement, curriculum development, enhancement of co-curricular offerings related to DQP areas of learning, improvement of or focus on assessment, enhanced quality of campus discussions around student learning, and the development of new processes to support student learning. In addition to the results of the curriculum mapping process, other important results of the DQP testing were the recognition of the importance of the involvement of stakeholders, enhanced faculty development, renewed institutional self-awareness, identification of certain learning outcomes employers identified as important regardless of academic field, and recognition of the importance of national conversation relating to dual enrollment and transferability.

Findings on the DQP and Its Use by Accreditors

Throughout the Commission-facilitated project, the institutions commented on the benefits, issues, opportunities, and unintended consequences that the DQP provided to higher education. At each virtual or face-to-face gathering, the Commission compiled and reported these findings, both to the institutions and to Lumina. In general, institutions cited the benefits of the DQP as (a) providing a good model for departments

and programs to construct their own outcomes; (b) enabling benchmarking and institutional accountability across institutions; (c) emphasizing the importance of general education across the curriculum; (d) serving as a resource to stimulate institutional conversations about student learning and assessment; (e) providing a useful framework in aligning courses, methods, and pedagogical tools; and (f) elucidating the existence of and need for a common understanding of degrees that can be clearly articulated to external and internal constituencies.

The most common concerns that institutions reported included:

- Standardization of higher education (whether the DQP was designed to do so or not)
- Confusing terms and language in the DQP
- The linear, vertical structure of the DQP
- The types of learning assessments necessary
- The specificity (too much and too little) in some areas of learning
- The lack of engagement of stakeholders in Lumina’s development of the DQP
- The misrepresentation of two-year level outcomes

Eighty-seven percent of the institutions expressed concern about the eventual standardization of student learning expectations as threatening institutional and faculty autonomy. A majority of the institutions had concerns about the language used in the DQP—concerns that ranged from the language being too restrictive to its being too broad. The interpretation of meaning was found to be difficult for some institutions as they were trying to map the DQP to current curricula. Although the DQP allows for a “sixth strand” area of learning that can be institutionally defined, many institutions expressed concern that some important outcomes were missing. There was also some concern about the structure of the profile as being too complex, levels of learning too low for some of the associate’s degree outcomes, and lack of an underlying theoretical framework, which could serve to gain a more favorable reception of the DQP. Several institutions requested that more examples and templates

be provided to promote more meaningful assessment. It was also suggested that the next iteration of the DQP would be enhanced by the involvement of higher education stakeholders, such as employers and K–12 partners.

Finally, 83% of the participants expressed concern about the potential for the DQP becoming mandatory for institutions through the accreditation process. Institutions commented about the need to remain autonomous in determining learning outcomes and how they were implemented according to the uniqueness of the institutions’ missions. Although some recognized that, in its draft form, the DQP allowed for broad interpretation of the areas of learning, there was still concern that application of the DQP across institutions would lead to unwanted standardization. However, some institutions acknowledged the worth of the DQP framework as a valuable Quality Initiative project and that the DQP could provide a needed standardized language around learning outcomes and assessment. The DQP was also cited as having the potential of providing a common framework across regional and professional accreditors, minimizing the duplication of effort for programs that need to meet requirements of multiple accrediting agencies.

Findings on the Efficacy of a Commission-facilitated, Collaborative Quality Initiative

Overwhelmingly, the participating institutions reported that the testing of the DQP and the structure of a Commission-facilitated Quality Initiative were positive elements of the new accrediting model. In their responses they cited the value of the cohort model, the benefits of using a national framework to revise general education, the ability to use the Quality Initiative to apply the DQP to current initiatives, the use of the DQP framework to improve current assessment processes, and the enhancement of the quality of conversations among faculty members about student learning.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Based on the analysis of the institutions’ final reports and transcripts of closing interviews and a review of all related documentation, the Lumina-funded project on the

Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) achieved all of its proposed goals. Twenty-three diverse institutions tested the DQP at various levels of their institutions, including general education, all or selected degree programs, and co-curricular programs. Faculty members, senior administrators, academic and student affairs support staff, students, and external stakeholders were engaged in the testing process. The Commission created an online collaboration network that was tested by the DQP cohort of institutions and used to document their projects, report their progress, and solicit feedback from other DQP institutions. All of the participants indicated that their experience in the Commission-facilitated Quality Initiative was beneficial to their institutions. At various stages throughout the process, participants gave the

Lumina Foundation extensive commentary on strengths and weaknesses of the DQP.

The implications of the project are twofold: (1) the Lumina Foundation now has ample commentary from this and other projects to discern appropriate next steps for the Degree Qualifications Profile, and (2) the Commission has significant opportunities for further developing the facilitated, collaborative Quality Initiative and finding ways that such initiatives may produce information of benefit across higher education, broaden ways accrediting organizations serve higher education, and enhance the credibility, transparency, and accountability of accreditation and higher education by speaking to improvement and innovation through accreditation in the form of the Quality Initiative.

INTRODUCTION

From May 2011 through August 2013, the Higher Learning Commission, the largest U.S. regional accreditor, collaborated with 23 diverse colleges and universities to test and to provide commentary on the Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). The Higher Learning Commission was in the process of creating a demonstration project for testing its proposed new Open Pathway for Accreditation, which will be fully implemented in 2015. In the Open Pathway, the assurance and improvement roles of accreditation are separated into an Assurance Process and an Improvement Process (referred to as a Quality Initiative).

At the same time the Commission was preparing to test the Open Pathway’s Quality Initiative, the Lumina Foundation was seeking partners to test the beta version of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). The DQP is a baseline set of reference points indicating what a student should know or be able to do by the time he or she earns an associate’s, bachelor’s, or master’s degree, regardless of his or her field of specialization.¹ Because student learning is fundamental to the Commission’s Open Pathway and accreditation criteria and institutions must demonstrate student learning, it was an opportunity to partner with Lumina and test the Open Pathway’s Quality Initiative using the beta version of the DQP.

The overarching goal of the Commission grant project was to test the Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile as an instrument for institutional evaluation and improvement and as a means for fulfilling the required Quality Initiative in the Open Pathway accreditation process. There were four major objectives of the project:

1. Engaging 23 institutions in testing the DQP with subsets of their academic programs
2. Establishing an online collaboration network that allows institutions to share their DQP initiative and

the outcomes of the work, as well as to document observations and ideas on the DQP and its efficacy in defining U.S. degrees in terms of student learning outcomes

3. Testing the DQP within the context of regional accreditation
4. Providing observations and findings on the DQP so as to inform the Lumina Foundation on further development of the Profile

The two-year grant (2011–2013) enabled the Commission to support 23 institutions with funded workshops and webinars that brought the institutions together to share the progress of their work, learn from each other, offer findings and commentary on the DQP, and plan for future DQP-related activities. Evaluation activities were interspersed throughout the project and included participation in Commission-facilitated webinars, phone interviews, surveys, and face-to-face closing interviews.

The primary objective of this report is to highlight the manner in which the institutions used the DQP, the results of their efforts, the impact on the institutions, the findings and recommendations to Lumina, and the institutional perceptions of the use of the DQP as a Quality Initiative.

1 Lumina Foundation, “The Degree Qualifications Profile—Executive Summary,” January 2011, http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/Degree_Profile-Executive_Summary.pdf.

OVERVIEW OF THE HLC OPEN PATHWAY

The Commission's Open Pathway for Reaffirmation of Accreditation assures quality by verifying that an institution (1) meets the Criteria for Accreditation and Federal Requirements and (2) is engaged in quality improvement. The Open Pathway Assurance Process takes place in the fourth year and again in the tenth year of the accreditation cycle. It requires the gathering of evidence in an electronic portfolio, the preparation of an assurance brief arguing the fulfillment of the Criteria for Accreditation as shown by the evidence, a peer review of the assurance argument, and (in the tenth year) a site visit. What is of interest for this project, however, is the Quality Initiative.

The Quality Initiative represents the Commission's effort to enhance the value of accreditation for established institutions whose reaccreditation is not seriously in doubt. In the Improvement Process the traditional self-study is replaced with a Quality Initiative, a major undertaking of substance and significance chosen by the institution to suit its present concerns or aspirations. The Quality Initiative can take one of three forms: (1) the institution designs and proposes its own Quality Initiative to suit its present concerns or aspirations; (2) the institution chooses an initiative from a menu of topics with scope and significance, or (3) the institution chooses to participate in a Commission-facilitated program.² When an institution selects its own initiative, the initiative must be approved through a peer-reviewed proposal process that judges its scope, substance, and appropriateness of resources; this process is waived for institutions participating in a Commission-facilitated initiative.

The Quality Initiative takes place between Years 5 and 9 of the 10-year Open Pathway cycle. A Quality Initiative may be designed to begin and be completed during this time or the institution may continue an initiative already in progress, or may achieve a key milestone in the work of a longer initiative. The Quality Initiative must have

scope and significance, but there is no requirement that it encompass an entire institution. The Quality Initiative is intended to allow institutions to take risks, aim high, and, hopefully, learn from any outcome—success or failure.

Beginning in 2009, the Commission engaged in demonstration projects to test the viability of this Open Pathway and to refine its concepts in collaboration with participating institutions. The demonstration projects undertook in a compressed, three-year time frame what would have been the last six years of the 10-year Open Pathway cycle, in which the institution completes its Improvement Process through a Quality Initiative (usually two to three years within the five-year window) and undergoes an Assurance Review. The first demonstration cohort, which began in the fall of 2009, was composed of institutions that were asked to develop their own initiatives. The second cohort, which began in the fall of 2010, shared a common initiative—participation in the HLC's Academy for Assessment of Student Learning. The third cohort shared the common initiative of piloting the Degree Qualifications Profile in an HLC-facilitated format.

OVERVIEW OF THE DEGREE QUALIFICATIONS PROFILE³

The development of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) resulted from the belief that the national movement to spur a dramatic increase in the number of students earning college degrees was not grounded in a common understanding of what these degrees should mean in terms of expected learning outcomes. The Profile addresses the need for a consistent public understanding of what these degrees should mean through the use of an expert national panel in the drafting of attributes that all students should attain as they progress through college. These attributes were framed with the recognition that to succeed in the contemporary workplace, today's students must prepare for jobs that are rapidly changing, use technologies that are still emerging, and work with colleagues from (and often in) all parts of the globe. The attributes

2 Higher Learning Commission, *The Open Pathway* (Chicago: Higher Learning Commission), p. 11, available for download at <http://www.ncahlc.org/Information-for-Institutions/pathways.html>.

3 Lumina Foundation, "The Degree Qualifications Profile—Executive Summary," January 2011, http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/Degree_Profile-Executive_Summary.pdf.

were developed for various levels of degrees and with increasing complexity.

The use of the DQP over time is intended to yield several positive results, including:

- A common vocabulary for sharing good practice.
- A foundation for better public understanding of what institutions of higher education do.
- Reference points for accountability that are far stronger than test scores or tallies of graduates, research dollars, student satisfaction ratings, job placements or patents.⁴

The Profile defines competencies in ways that emphasize both the cumulative integration of learning from many sources and the application of learning in a variety of settings. This approach can offer benchmarks for improving the quality of learning and lead and support learning assessment.

In the DQP, the student learning outcomes, or competencies, are organized in five broad categories:

1. **Specialized Knowledge.** Independent of the vocabularies, theories, and skills of particular fields, what students in any specialization should demonstrate with respect to the specialization itself.
2. **Broad, Integrative Knowledge.** Something that transcends typical distribution requirements bound by the first two years of higher education. This category of competencies is about bringing together learning from broad fields of study throughout the three degree levels covered in the DQP.
3. **Intellectual Skills.** Both traditional and nontraditional cognitive operations are brought together and in sometimes new formulations: communications fluencies, quantitative fluencies, analytic operations, use of information resources, and the capacity to perceive from different points of reference.
4. **Applied Learning.** What students can do with what they know, demonstrated by innovation and fluency

in addressing unscripted problems at work and in other non-classroom settings.

5. **Civic Learning.** Integration of knowledge and skills in applications that facilitate student articulation and response to social, environmental and economic challenges at local, national and global levels.⁵

PROJECT PARTICIPANTS

In early 2011, the Commission identified 23 institutions scheduled for a comprehensive review for Reaffirmation of Accreditation in 2015 to participate in the testing of a Quality Initiative using the DQP, vetting these institutions with the Lumina Foundation to ensure diversity. Selection criteria included their current good standing with the HLC and the ability to add to the diversity of institutions participating. Through Spring 2011, the Commission contacted and invited the 23 institutions, providing them with an overview of the initiative and the implications for their reaffirmation of accreditation. The participating institutions are from 14 states and represent a broad spectrum of the Higher Learning Commission's region:

- Alexandria Technical and Community College (MN)
- Central New Mexico Community College (NM)
- Central Wyoming College (WY)
- Cochise College (AZ)
- Harding University (AR)
- Hastings College (NE)
- Henry Ford Community College (MI)
- Illinois College (IL)
- Kansas City Kansas Community College (KS)
- Macalester College (MN)
- Marian University (IN)
- Marshall University (WV)
- Miami University (OH)

4 Lumina Foundation, "The Degree Qualifications Profile," January 2011, p. 2, http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf.

5 Lumina Foundation, "Executive Summary." For more information about the DQP, go to http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf.

- New Mexico Junior College (NM)
- Nicolet Area Technical College (WI)
- North Dakota State College of Science (ND)
- North Dakota State University (ND)
- Otterbein University (OH)
- Saint Mary’s College (IN)
- Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College (IN)
- The University of Chicago (IL)
- University of Wisconsin-Whitewater (WI)
- Westminster College (MO)

When characterized by their Carnegie Classification, these institutions represent 15 different institutional classifications, including two-year, baccalaureate, master’s, doctoral-granting, urban, rural, residential, public, private, and from very large to very small. All institutions are not-for-profit and, collectively, serve more than 130,000 students.

PROJECT ACTIVITY

After recruiting the 23 institutions for the demonstration project, the Commission held the launch workshop in June 2011. The workshop was jointly facilitated by the HLC and the Lumina Foundation. The DQP and its current status were reviewed and the underlying premises for its development explained. During the workshop, institutions asked questions, provided comments, and explored how the use of the DQP could be of sufficient scope and significance for their institutional needs for a Quality Initiative. After the workshop, participants returned to their institutions and met with other campus leaders to decide whether or not participating in the DQP Cohort was a good fit for their institutions. They were then asked to affirm their intention to join in the project by signing the Accreditation Agreement. All 23 institutions that attended the June 2011 launch workshop agreed to participate in the demonstration project.

From Spring 2011 until Fall 2013, the institutions undertook the work of testing the DQP by using it in numerous ways to analyze and evaluate their programs and identify opportunities for improvement. Per the

Accreditation Agreement, each institution conducted an initiative of its own design that compared a portion or subset of one or more of the following—current curricula, supporting activity (such as co-curriculum), defined learning outcomes, and assessment practices and results—with one or more of the following DQP areas: learning, performance levels, cumulative integration of learning, and application of learning. Initiatives could take a variety of forms but had to be marked by significance, scope, and substance. Institutions were able to choose to test the entire DQP; conversely, institutions were able to focus on significant elements or concepts within the DQP. Institutions chose to engage specific cohorts of students or other key constituencies, both internal and external. Finally, institutions were expected to provide in-depth commentary on the DQP itself, to evaluate and formulate plans to improve the institution’s educational enterprise, and to collaborate with other institutions in the project by sharing findings and synthesizing commentary for Lumina on the DQP and the Commission on the Open Pathway Quality Initiative.

To conduct the project, the Commission facilitated a structured series of meetings and webinars designed to build collective understanding and a learning community around the DQP. An electronic forum was established with the intent to support a community of discourse around the use of the DQP and its appropriateness for the Quality Initiative. The electronic forum, referred to as the Collaboration Network, was tested by the DQP Cohort during the Quality Initiative and will continue to support other Commission initiatives that can be enhanced through a mechanism for collaboration and peer review.

BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT

There were several benefits to the institutions that participated in the DQP project. They were provided with an opportunity to transition early to the new Open Pathway for reaffirmation of accreditation. Their participation also enabled them to have a Commission-guided opportunity to test a new way of evaluating and demonstrating the quality of the programs they offer. In addition, they had the benefit of actively collaborating

and sharing with other institutions that were involved in similar projects. The institutions also had the distinction of being participants in the testing of the new Open Pathway Quality Initiative process, were able to use and test the new Collaboration Network designed to create a community of educators interested in the quality of education, and were able to be involved in the testing of the beta version of the Degree Qualifications Profile.

The benefits of the grant to the Commission were the opportunity to deploy a third cohort of institutions in the testing of the Open Pathway using a potentially powerful new way of evaluating quality in relation to student learning and, also, the opportunity to design and test the new Commission Collaboration Network.

The Lumina Foundation benefited from 23 diverse institutions piloting the draft Degree Qualifications Profile with the attention that comes when something real—in this instance, an institution’s continued regional accreditation—is at stake. What was learned from the project should contribute materially to the larger Lumina project to seek clearer definition of U.S. degrees defined by student learning outcomes. Because the HLC is uniquely positioned—with more than 1,000 institutions of every degree-granting type covering 19 states—it provided the capacity to offer a truly diverse set of institutions for the test of the Profile. This test demonstrates how future institutions could use the Profile and how future accreditation processes might embrace it.

|| METHODOLOGY

This report is the result of an analysis of the project documents prepared by the Commission as well as feedback from the participants. The documents reviewed were the Lumina grant application, the Lumina Foundation Degree Qualifications Profile, Commission accreditation booklets, Commission interim and special reports to Lumina, workshop summaries, participant phone interview results, participant survey results, transcripts of end-of-project interviews, and institutional final reports.

The review of Commission documents was used to identify the purposes of the grant, the scope of the project, processes used, and preliminary findings. The institutional

feedback was used to determine the experience of institutions participating (which was also documented in the Commission interim reports to Lumina), their views on the usefulness of the DQP as a Quality Initiative, and their comments and suggestions to Lumina about their experience in using the DQP profile.

This report focuses on what was learned from final reports submitted by the institutions and from the institutions’ final interviews. Each final report included the institution’s account of its:

- Original project and goals
- Changes to the project over time
- Results and accomplishments
- Impact on the institution
- People involved
- Resources used

The final report was cross-referenced with each institution’s interview transcript to confirm that all of the institutional feedback was captured and summarized. There were two questions asked during the final interview that were not a part of the written final report:

- In what ways could/should the DQP be used by accreditors?
- To what degree was the involvement with the DQP and the Commission a valuable Quality Initiative for accreditation purposes?

Responses to these questions were analyzed in relation to one of the goals of the project, which was to test the DQP as an instrument for institutional evaluation and improvement as a Quality Initiative.⁶

|| FINDINGS AND RESULTS

INSTITUTIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND IMPACT

The diversity of institutions and the autonomy of each in how they chose to test the DQP provides both challenges and opportunities for summarizing

⁶ Commission’s Grant proposal to the Lumina Foundation regarding the DQP.

When approached about participation in the HLC Lumina/Pathways project, NMJC faculty and academic leaders believed that the project represented an interesting opportunity for the institution. In addition, it was believed that the project had the potential to contribute in a meaningful way to efforts to improve educational quality at the college. What was not anticipated was how the DQP project would become a truly transformational force on campus and how it would continue to thrive well beyond the original timeframe of the HLC-sponsored activity.

– New Mexico Junior College

their experiences. The challenge is to synthesize their experiences in a meaningful way that does not lose the richness of their differences while at the same time looking for distinct findings that can illuminate the breadth of experiences. The following narrative will try to do both.

Projects and Goals

Each institution developed testing processes for the DQP independently of the other participants, with the exception of Alexandria Technical and Community College and North Dakota State College of Science, which worked collaboratively to engage regional stakeholders in order to understand the needs of graduates of career and technical programs. Of the 23 institutions participating in the testing, 15 (65%) tested the DQP at more than one degree level and one institution tested the DQP only with general education programs. Several of the institutions tested the DQP with select degree programs and others looked at how the DQP aligned with outcomes across all degree programs. For some institutions, the DQP experience was reported as transforming while for others the experience was reported in less dramatic ways but still impactful on their institutions.

All institutions had multiple projects and/or goals for testing the DQP. Following are the 14 institutional goals articulated across all institutional projects. The numbers in parentheses indicate the number of institutions sharing that goal:

1. Perform gap analysis/curriculum mapping (23)
2. Enhance assessment processes (14)
3. Enhance existing curricular and co-curricular processes and initiatives (5)
4. Review/enhance general education (5)
5. Promote integration across the curriculum (5)

6. Provide a voice in shaping the DQP (4)
7. Increase faculty focus on student learning (4)
8. Promote faculty development (4)
9. Identify gaps in DQP (3)
10. Identify degree of external relevance of DQP, e.g., employer engagement (3)
11. Participate in national conversations of significance to higher education (3)
12. Hone the institutional mission (2)
13. Enhance program review (2)
14. Identify ways to harmonize outcomes with other accrediting bodies (1)

As institutions began to implement their initial plans for testing, some modifications were made and reported; most of the changes were not substantive but only modified the scope of activity. For example, one institution originally planned to map only select programs but then decided to map the DQP to all programs. During the mapping process, another institution found that many programs lacked documented assessment processes, so they expanded their emphasis to the development of assessment plans for all programs. A third institution decided to expand its information-gathering process to include multiple audiences. In all, only nine institutions reported any modifications to their original focus or goals for the DQP testing.

Curriculum Mapping. All institutions reported using the DQP as a curriculum mapping tool to identify both gaps and consistencies with their current learning expectations and/or assessment practices. There was a wide variance in how the mapping took place, who was involved, and the purpose of the mapping. However, the

analysis of practice identified six different uses of the DQP mapping processes:

1. Identify gaps between the DQP and institutional learning outcomes (course, program, general education, co-curricular)
2. Strengthen or revise general education programs
3. Validate current learning outcomes
4. Be intentional about the verticality of learning outcomes
5. Identify external constituents' expectations for learning compared to the DQP
6. Identify deficiencies in current assessment practices

Some institutions used the mapping process for multiple purposes. The mapping was generally reported to be a catalyst for conversations that ultimately led to revisions of curriculum and/or co-curricular programs, modifications of assessment processes, integration with program review, external benchmarking with current practices, or documentation of the strength and weakness of the DQP.

There are things in the DQP like civic learning that we, frankly, never would have thought about, but we forced ourselves to think about it and really reflect on whether we should or shouldn't include these in our Gen Ed outcomes.

– Central New Mexico Community College

Results and Accomplishments

Institutions were asked to identify their results and accomplishments related to the project. There were several themes that emerged related to general education, curriculum and co-curricular issues, assessment, quality of discussions related to DQP issues, development of new processes, and findings related to the structure of the DQP. Each of these is discussed below.

General Education. Nine institutions (39%) reported changes and/or modifications to their general education curriculum as a result of their curriculum mapping exercise. Two institutions identified civic learning as

having limited application or as missing from their general education learning outcomes entirely. Four used the DQP as a framework for assessing or revising their general education requirements. One institution updated its core domain of critical thinking to align with its assessment, another identified gaps in nine areas and is considering changes in three domain areas related to the DQP, and yet another has developed a better alignment between general education and capstone courses.

Curricula. Of the 16 institutions (70%) that reported results or findings across various parts of their curricula, the nature of the results and accomplishments varied widely. Some institutions tested the DQP with select departments or general education, while others focused on select DQP outcomes and/or the usefulness of the DQP framework to guide their review of student learning at various levels. The results of using the DQP to review the curricula include:

- Improvement of curricular assessment processes (8)
- Addition or major revision of courses (4)
- Alignment of the levels of learning across the curriculum to be more intentional acknowledging the progressive nature of student learning (2)
- Development or revision of learning objectives using the DQP framework
- Creation of a syllabus template emphasizing student learning outcomes
- Development of a consistent framework for talking about learning outcomes
- Involvement of stakeholders in curriculum discussions related to the DQP
- The use of the DQP as a framework to compare/contrast current learning outcomes
- Identification of differences between student and faculty values related to learning outcomes
- Recognition of the value of the co-curriculum in supporting the DQP outcomes
- Identification of a common thread of desirable outcomes across all fields of study valued by employers

In 2011, less than 10% of undergraduate degree programs and less than 5% of graduate degree programs had assessment plans. By the time the Quality Initiative Project was concluded in spring 2013, 100% of undergraduate programs and over 80% of graduate program have full-cycle assessment plans and are in the process of collecting data related to their student learning outcomes. The DQP project was integrated into work of the university-wide assessment committee.

– Miami University

Co-curricular Offerings. Three institutions reported findings related to their co-curricular offerings. One institution reported that they found that out-of-class experiences were “not leveraged as purposefully as they could be to advance learning.” Another institution reported that they developed a system in which students can earn a “card” by reflecting on how they met institutional learning outcomes through participation in either curricular or co-curricular activities on an experiential transcript. A third institution mapped the DQP outcomes against Student Life programming and found that many of the skills not covered in academic areas were developed in leadership programs and internships.

Assessment. The refinement and/or development of assessment processes were mentioned by 14 institutions (61%). Accomplishments that were reported ranged from the development of department-level “assessment leaders” to the identification of gaps and/or missing assessments for some outcomes. Additional results included:

- Identification of shortcomings in current assessment practices (4)
- Development of new assessment processes and methods (7)
- Development of a full set of major specific learning outcomes with assessments

The DQP helped to create some important conversations regarding learning outcomes. The impact of this may not seem profound, but for our institution, it was quite significant. The DQP was a tool for us to begin a conversation that we knew needed to occur on our campus in order to make our General Studies revision successful.

– St. Mary-of-the-Woods College

- Development of a sustainable program assessment model based on continuous improvement and tied to planning

One institution reported that the four departments who tested the DQP (Accounting, Psychology, Special Education, and Communication) found little value in the DQP as a tool for advancing academic assessments.

Quality of Discussions. Eight institutions (35%) commented about how the testing of the DQP affected the quality of the discussions about curriculum and student learning. While some mentioned the value of having the DQP as a framework for the discussions, others emphasized the nature of the conversations and described them using the following descriptors:

- Insightful
- Thoughtful
- Passionate
- Revealing
- Rich
- Broad and deep

It was reported that the DQP stimulated focused conversations about student learning and promoted faculty and staff reflection on current practices.

New Processes. Five institutions (22%) reported that new curricular processes were developed to support the focus on student learning. Standing committees were developed or revised to support the student outcomes and assessment processes. One institution developed a new reporting process linked to data collection for each course that would roll up into a program-level report. At one institution this process resulted in a new course proposal system that asks faculty to articulate how the anticipated learning is related to the DQP. Another institution

incorporated the reporting on student outcomes in a revised program review process.

Impact on Institutions

Seventeen institutions (74%) described specific impacts the testing of the DQP project had on their institutions. Seven institutions (41%) identified the enhanced quality of conversations as a significant impact. Three institutions described the importance of the project in enriching/revising their general education curriculum, and five institutions cited leveraging the DQP project to build on existing initiatives. These initiatives included strategic planning, development of a curriculum management system, enhancement of an initiative already undertaken to revise the general education program, and the integration of the AAC&U LEAP⁷ learning outcomes into curricular and co-curricular activities. Two other institutions cited the importance of the project as a required accreditation Quality Initiative, and three institutions commented on the impact the project had on their assessment processes. Institutions identified these additional impacts:

- Provided a way to ensure that program outcomes meet national standards
- Increased level of trust that this project was not a “top-down” mandate and that feedback from institutions was valued
- Provided an opportunity to participate in a national movement for accountability
- Integrated academic program review, including learning outcomes assessment, into the governance structure, making it sustainable

The DQP focus groups and assessment workshops galvanized meaningful conversations across the University about the meaning of higher education and student learning.

– Miami University

People Involved

Institutions were asked to identify the people who were directly involved in the testing of the DQP at their institution. The analysis revealed that, across the breadth of institutions involved, almost all aspects of higher education were involved in some way in this project.

Faculty. All institutions reported the involvement of faculty in various ways, such as curriculum mapping, committees, workshops, focus groups, meetings, and faculty forums. One institution reported more than 5,000 hours of faculty time over the three-year period of the testing project. It was clear from reviewing the results that almost all institutions’ faculties had a significant role in the testing of the DQP and the development of institutional projects.

Administrators. All of the DQP project teams included representatives from the administration. The administrative team members included provosts, vice presidents representing Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Finance, and Technical Education, as well as various academic deans, associate deans, and directors. There were also representatives from offices of Institutional Research, Planning, Assessment, Institutional Effectiveness, Curriculum, Teaching and Learning, Library, Leadership Center, General Education, Career Counseling, Honors Program, University Transfer, and Student Success. Each institution reported a broad spectrum of decision- and policy-making representatives who guided the DQP testing.

Institutional Committees. Although the function and roles of institutional committees vary in terms of responsibilities, the broad array of committees utilized by some of the institutions is an indication that the governance structures of the institutions were leveraged to get significant feedback and shared commitment to the DQP project. Ten institutions (43%) reported direct involvement of governance committees. These included variations of the following:

- Curriculum committees (3)
- General education/studies committees (4)
- Assessment committees (5)

7 This stands for American Association of Colleges and Universities Liberal Education and America’s Promise.

- Accreditation task force/committees (3)
- Student and academic services committee
- Academic affairs committee
- First-year experience committee
- Undergraduate learning experiences task force
- Institutional effectiveness committee
- Administrative Council
- President’s Cabinet
- Dean’s Council
- Budget committee
- Graduate committee

Students. Seven institutions (30%) reported involving students in the testing of the DQP. Three institutions involved students through the taking of surveys or writing essays. The remaining four institutions involved students through focus groups, formal discussions, or participation on various committees involved with the DQP testing.

External Stakeholders. Seven institutions (30%) involved external stakeholder groups in a discussion of the DQP that helped to shape their projects, with some involving more than one stakeholder group. These groups included advisory boards, alumni representatives, parents, community groups, employer groups, K–12 representatives, feeder community colleges, and industry partners.

In a discussion about who is involved in the DQP project, it is important to recognize the difference between an “advisory” role and the responsibility for making decisions that enable the process to move forward. An analysis of the institutional final reports revealed that eight institutions requested formal approval related to at least one aspect of their DQP projects. Seven of the eight institutions received approval from the faculty governance structure: faculty senate (3) and entire faculty assembly (4). One institution received approval from the Dean’s Council and Board of Trustees, and another institution got approval from its Board of Governors.

Resources Used

Each institution was asked to identify the resources it used to complete its project. Each reported the expenditure of financial resources, use of institutional tools and processes, and activities.

Financial. It was clear from the analysis that the most significant resource used in the completion of the DQP project was human capital. This has been reported in the previous section but, for some institutions, it also translates into direct use of financial resources. Fourteen institutions (61%) reported that they used financial resources beyond that provided by the Lumina grant to implement their Quality Initiative. Some institutions paid to send additional representatives to the HLC Degree Qualifications Profile workshops. Money was also spent on faculty compensation/release time (4), conference attendance (2), consultants, and finances to hire administrative support. At two institutions, staff positions were increased from part-time to full-time to support the project.

Assessment Processes and Tools. Nine institutions (39%) reported developing and using assessment processes and tools to gather data for their projects. These tools included surveys (6), focus groups, interviews, development of a planning tool, development of assessment rubrics, electronic database mapping, a program review electronic portfolio, and an electronic curriculum map template.

Institutional Processes. In addition to assessment processes, six institutions developed internal processes to support their reporting needs. These include the development of a wiki site for document sharing, development of a new course proposal template, development of a program review template (2), and the expansion of a competency index to include assessment.

Institutional Events. Faculty development activities and workshops to bring faculty together were common across 11 institutions (48%). These took the form of organized workshops around specific topics (e.g., civic learning and engagement, curriculum mapping, syllabus development, assessment) and

reviewing findings of curriculum mapping. One institution modified its new faculty orientation to include assessment of outcomes. Another institution held sessions for staff to inform them of the new general education requirements. All of these activities were driven by their participation in the DQP testing.

Most Important Findings

The most common findings of importance related to the degree to which the learning outcomes were consistent with the DQP (55%). Six of the institutions (27%) discussed the importance of stakeholder involvement in discussions of learning outcomes. These stakeholders included employers, community members, transfer institutions, students, and/or professional accreditors. Other findings that were identified as most important were:

- Renewed institutional self-awareness (academic values, importance of intentionality, importance of connection to constituents)
- Difference between faculty and students in the interpretation of the DQP outcomes
- Importance of co-curricular activities in developing “broad, integrative knowledge”
- Impact of the national conversation about learning outcomes for issues of dual enrollment and transferability
- Clarity of the meaning of what qualified as a capstone experience
- Identification of traits that were common among all employers regardless of field that transcended the technical skills component

Under the topic of “most important findings,” one institution expressed the concern of some faculty that the adoption of the DQP could threaten the autonomy of the institution, department, and instructors. When institutions were asked to provide comments to Lumina about the DQP, 20 institutions (87%) expressed varying degrees of concern about the DQP being used to standardize higher education and undermine institutional autonomy. Four institutions identified the testing of the DQP as promoting

faculty development through developing formal processes for faculty to engage in outcomes assessment and writing outcomes that are at the appropriate levels. Three institutions reported that it was an excellent catalyst to get faculty to think about the rationale for their curricular and course design and have them reflect in a broader way on how students acquire certain skills.

[The project] heightened (our) awareness of the importance of intentionality in designing student learning experiences.

– Marshall University

FINDINGS RELATED TO THE DQP

Although institutions were asked to indicate recommendations they would make to Lumina about the DQP in a separate section of their final report, 14 institutions (61%) identified deficiencies as a part of their findings and accomplishments. Their findings varied but can be classified into three areas:

- **Concerns about specific areas of learning**

Two institutions found that, as defined, broad integrative knowledge did not adequately capture their view of this area of learning. One indicated that the expectation that students should be able to “describe the way in which at least two disciplines define . . .” was too challenging for the associate’s level. Another institution found that its faculty did not approach Broad Integrative Knowledge in the way defined by the DQP. A third institution found that Civic Learning was too prescriptive in the expectation that students should take an active role in a community context.

- **Level of learning for associate’s degree too low**

This was mentioned in the findings of one associate’s degree institution and was most prevalent in the Specialized Knowledge area of learning.

- **Missing areas of learning**

Areas of missing learning outcomes were reported

for the following outcomes: computer literacy (2), faith (2), ethics (2), teamwork (1), computer literacy (2), and diversity (1).

A more thorough discussion of recommendations to Lumina appear later in this report.

FINDINGS ON THE USE OF THE DQP BY ACCREDITORS

When institutional teams were interviewed about their experience with the DQP project, they were asked how the DQP could/should be used by accreditors. The primary concern voiced (by 83%) was that the DQP should not be mandated by accrediting organizations. Institutions commented on the need to be autonomous in terms of what outcomes were important to their mission and how the institutions implemented those outcomes. Others commented on the need to be able to “opt out” of some of the DQP areas of learning in favor of mission-driven areas of learning. This is not to say that many institutions saw no value in what a DQP-type framework could bring to accreditation. The desire for a common language and foundation for assessment was mentioned as a positive contribution that the DQP could make. One institution indicated that, although it did not want the DQP to be mandated, the outcomes were broad enough to provide a common language and leave room for institutional interpretation. This would provide for institutional autonomy in interpretation and also give the accreditors a way to communicate to external publics the value of college degrees. Six institutions (26%) identified one of the benefits of adoption of a DQP-like framework for accreditation as the provision of a common language to discuss learning outcomes and/or assessment. Other potential benefits to the accreditation process included:

- Good framework to start discussions about potential standards used by accreditors
- Provides a common framework across regional and professional accreditors
- Stresses the importance of portability/transfer of degrees/courses

- Provides a useful framework for a Quality Initiative project
- Useful as a tool to articulate student outcomes and what you are doing to meet and assess them

FINDINGS ON THE VALUE OF THE COMMISSION-FACILITATED, COLLABORATIVE QUALITY INITIATIVE

There were three institutions involved in the testing of the DQP who are also accredited under the HLC Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) process, and although they found value in testing the DQP, they did not see that this project differed from the quality projects they were already doing in AQIP. Therefore, their responses are not included in the summary for this question, as they will not be participating in the Quality Initiative process. One institution did not have a response. Of the remaining 19 institutions, there was unanimous support of the use of testing the DQP as a valuable Quality Initiative. Every institution that responded cited examples of why it thought this project enhanced their educational processes.

We're thrilled to be out of the old system and into the new one. We thought there would be a price to pay at the beginning, but it turned out that we actually got paid.

– Illinois College

Five institutions (26%) commented on the value of the cohort model for the exchange of ideas and understanding the issues from diverse points of view. In addition to the value of the cohort model, institutions commented on specific areas where they had moved ahead as a result of participating in this project. Examples include:

- Provided a framework to begin work in revising general education
- Applied the project to a current initiative (2)
- Developed tools as a result of the project that will be invaluable moving forward
- Strengthened assessment processes in a systematic way

- Developed a sense of partnership with the Higher Learning Commission
- Focused on DQP, which has been a transforming tool
- Promoted quality conversations among faculty about student learning

(DQP) brings teaching, learning, assessment and program review together in good ways and prompts a culture shift toward a common understanding of degrees.

– Henry Ford Community College

RECOMMENDATIONS TO LUMINA

As a part of the final Quality Initiative report, institutions were asked to provide comments and recommendations they would like to make to Lumina on the DQP. The responses discussed below have been categorized by the most common themes that emerged.

Benefits of the DQP. Twelve institutions (52%) commented on the benefits of the DQP. Two institutions indicated the value of the DQP in describing the expectations of learning outcomes of graduates, which can be used with external audiences and transfer institutions. Three institutions cited the benefit of having a common foundation of student learning across institutions, enabling benchmarking and institutional accountability. Another benefit identified was that the DQP emphasizes student learning that is progressive in complexity as well as broad in scope and underscores the importance of general education across the curriculum. Other benefits of the DQP included:

- Prompts a culture shift toward a common understanding of degrees
- Offers a framework for an institution to provide evidence that it is accomplishing its learning objectives
- Provides a good model to departments and programs in constructing their own outcomes
- Serves as a resource for engaging discussions around student learning

- Provides a useful framework in aligning courses, methods, and pedagogical goals

Recommendations on Standardization. Twenty institutions (87%) expressed varying levels of concern about the DQP and its potential use. The most common concern, articulated by 10 institutions (43%), was that the use of the DQP would lead to the expectation of standardization of outcomes. This was viewed as a threat to institutional, departmental, and instructional autonomy and a potential barrier to its broad acceptance by institutions. The notion of a competency-based, national curriculum was seen as being contrary to mission-focused accreditation expectations, not allowing diversity among institutions.

Recommendations on Language and Usage. Sixteen institutions (70%) expressed concerns about the language used in the DQP. Concerns ranged from “too specific and restraining” to “sometimes too broad.” Each institution that expressed concern about the language noted confusion in interpreting what terms meant and/or language that was too restrictive to be applied at the program level. There was also concern expressed about the use of multiple verbs and complexity of some criteria that impeded the mapping process and led to lengthy discussions among faculty about what meaning was intended by the authors of the DQP. It was also noted that faculty members from different disciplines and students from different majors interpreted the outcomes in different ways leading to further confusion.

In order to make comparisons across institutions as to what institutions value in relation to DQP, Lumina needs to promote the DQP and disseminate information about its application while permitting institutions to adapt the DQP to fit its mission, purpose, and values.

– Kansas City Kansas Community College

Recommendations on Specific Outcomes. Four institutions (17%) expressed concerns about the expectation of mastery in a second language or second academic field. This is seen as being an unrealistic expectation, as many policy makers are demanding shorter paths to bachelor completion.

Specific outcomes were also reported as missing from the DQP. Of the 10 institutions (43%) that mentioned specific omissions, five (22%) noted the absence of ethics as an outcome. The following is a list of other outcomes mentioned:

- Spirituality (3)
- Diversity (2)
- Presentation skills (2)
- Teamwork/collaboration (3)
- Leadership (2)
- Life skills
- Life-long learning
- Technological literacy

Recommendations on Outcomes Structure. Fifteen institutions (65%) commented about some aspect of the structure of the DQP. Four institutions (17%) specifically commented that the associate’s degree levels were too low and were, in reality, more similar to those identified at the baccalaureate degree level. They also indicated that a clear distinction needs to be made between the occupational associate’s degree and the transfer associate’s degree. Two institutions recommended a two-tier structure that included a minimum set of outcomes common to all institutions and a “menu” of outcomes that an institution can modify according to its mission. As a means to create a more favorable reception of the DQP, three institutions suggested that the underlying theoretical framework that informs the content and structure of the DQP should be made explicit. Other suggestions about the structure of the DQP include:

- Specific examples/profiles from various fields are needed (2)
- Outcomes seem to favor the scientific method at the exclusion of an arts-based approach

- Some outcomes are too complex and would benefit from being broken down into smaller units to facilitate assessment

Recommendations on Assessment. Six institutions (26%) had specific recommendations around assessment. Two institutions recommended that it would be helpful to have examples of assessment approaches at the various levels of DQP outcomes that included hands-on and game-based virtual models. Another institution recommended a reference guide for wide dissemination that would include examples, rubrics, and templates that are discipline-specific and can be used to promote the assessment of each of the DQP competencies. However, another institution cautioned about being too prescriptive about assessment as some of the outcomes appeared to be difficult to measure, and yet another warned that some of the outcomes contained multiple objectives that needed further clarification before they could be assessed. Finally, an institution recommended that in the next iteration of the DQP more emphasis should be placed on the continuous improvement nature of the assessment model.

Recommendations on Stakeholders. Five institutions (22%) emphasized the need for broader input from stakeholders in the refining of the DQP. Although some were not specific about the stakeholder group, two mentioned industry and two others indicated the importance of involving K–12.

We think that the emphasis on intellectual skills in the Matrix is a good thing. Yet from one angle the Matrix reads as washed out and too general, while from another it is in danger of being taken literally as a prescription for the content of syllabi that will substitute vague rubrics for substantive forms of inquiry grounded in actual intellectual practice.

– The University of Chicago

|| CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The goals of the Commission and the Lumina Foundation in implementing this project was to have multiple diverse institutions test the Degree Qualifications Profile in the context of the Higher Learning Commission's Open Pathway Quality Initiative process. The goals were fourfold: (1) engage selected institutions in testing the DQP with subsets of their academic programs, (2) establish an online collaborative network for institutions to post their projects and progress with feedback from cohorts, (3) test the DQP within the context of accreditation, and, (4) provide observations and findings on the DQP to inform the Lumina Foundation on further development of the profile.

Based on the analysis of the institutions' final reports and closing interviews and a review of documentation of the project, it is concluded that the project met its goals in all four areas. Twenty-three diverse institutions tested the DQP at various levels, including general education, all or selected degree programs, and co-curricular programs. Faculty, senior administrators, academic and student affairs support staff, students, and external stakeholders were engaged in the testing process. The

Commission created an online collaboration network that was tested by the DQP Cohort of institutions and used to document their projects, report progress, and get feedback from other DQP institutions. All of the participating institutions indicated that their experience in the Commission-facilitated Quality Initiative was beneficial to the institution. At various stages throughout the process, participants provided the Lumina Foundation with detailed feedback on the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the DQP.

The implications of the project are twofold: (1) the Lumina Foundation now has ample commentary from this and other projects to use in discerning appropriate next steps for the Degree Qualifications Profile, and (2) the Commission has significant opportunities for further developing the facilitated, collaborative Quality Initiative and finding ways that such initiatives may produce information of benefit across higher education, may broaden ways accrediting organizations serve higher education, and may enhance the credibility, transparency, and accountability of accreditation and higher education by speaking to improvement and innovation through accreditation in the form of the Quality Initiative. 🌱

APPENDIX: CASE STUDIES

ALEXANDRIA TECHNICAL AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE (*Alexandria, Minnesota*)

Title of Project

Exploring the Degree Qualification Profile for ATCC

Overview

Alexandria Technical and Community College (ATCC) and North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) collaborated to attain input from leading employers in their region. This data has helped the two institutions better understand the needs of stakeholders and provide programming that meets the needs of students and employers. The project enabled the institutions to provide national leadership in the examination of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as it relates to the associate's degree and bring focus to career and technical education.

Goals

1. Assess external industry responses to DQP; specifically, the implications of DQP on the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree.
2. Identify gaps between existing curriculum and assessment methods and DQP at ATCC.
3. Improve awareness of DQP for students, industry, and higher education partners.
4. Determine the level of shared findings with peer institutions.

People Involved

The project involved industry partners providing feedback to ATCC on the DQP through participation in the Industry Summit directly, follow-up through participation on industry advisory boards, and direct involvement with industry internships for students.

The project involved administration and faculty members reviewing the learning outcomes for programs and divisions in an improvement cycle for curricula. College leaders participated through the direct

involvement in the Pathway Cohort Three project. The cohort experience allowed them to facilitate the project and to better understand the national influences on expectations for graduates with an AAS degree.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

ATCC held the first assessment summit in collaboration with NDSCS. Key findings from a focused feedback session with multiple industry segments included:

- Industry responses support the distribution of learning outcomes identified by the DQP.
- All graduates of two-year colleges are expected to have technical (specialized) skills that are appropriate to a program or discipline. Differentiation of graduates' future success is determined by their "essential skills," broadly represented as Intellectual Skills in the DQP.
- New teaching models are needed. Technical skills teaching can be linked to broad integrative knowledge and intellectual skills. Traditional delivery will not support teaching all of the DQP outcomes to the level of proficiency required within a two-year degree.
- Technology literacy is a core competency that business and industry expect of college graduates. This includes current technologies in mobile communications, the ability to use online resources, and understanding of online business practices.
- There is strong endorsement of work experience being integrated within the degree progression. Industry is interested in being connected to higher education as a partner—not just as a market for placement of graduates.

The college reviewed learning outcomes for select college programs as determined by program industry advisory committees, external assessments being used to benchmark college learning with national standards, and the DQP. Outcomes from each of the three sources were displayed graphically on a template so that program instructors could compare where there was strong support and where gaps existed. The results found few gaps when the full program curriculum was included. Each of these programs includes a comprehensive general education component, industry internships, technical content learning outcomes, and student involvement in structured, nationally recognized student organizations.

The ATCC, working jointly with the NDSCS, established marketing materials to distribute to industry partners, higher education institutions, and students. Advertising was not identified as a factor that contributed to student awareness of the college learning outcomes. It did provide an increased awareness of industry needs and expectations, both for industry stakeholders and representatives of higher education.

Alexandria Technical and Community College gained understanding of the difficulties in describing the common learning that moves across similar degree levels. The diversity of the mission, philosophy, and students in higher education institutions does not lead to an easy

description of what a degree means or what level of student accomplishment should be demonstrated to earn that degree. The DQP, while inadequate in some ways, provides a framework to define not just general education, but professional and technical degrees that reflect college-level accomplishment.

Most Important Findings

- The DQP does not articulate the level of mastery and consistency required of graduates in many associate's degrees. The bar is not set high enough if individuals must participate in the workplace at a proficiency level that requires essentially no tolerance for errors.
- Social, technical, and cultural abilities were all identified as critical to career success. Even the most technical jobs are being transformed as the technician is connected to the customer through new media and expectations of transparency. The technician is the new face of the company to the customer.
- Associate's degrees are not simply entry points to higher degrees. The AAS degree, in particular, is unique in that the degree represents learning that is distinct and applied. Intellectual skills and broad knowledge are deeply embedded in the skills required of graduates who have earned associate's degrees.

CENTRAL NEW MEXICO COMMUNITY COLLEGE (*Albuquerque, New Mexico*)

Title of Project

Evaluating the Applicability of the DQP Relative to the Dual-degree Missions of a Community College

Overview

The project's overall mission was to help realign Central New Mexico Community College's (CNM) assessment efforts to include all programs and degree components into an integrated model designed to yield genuine improvements in student learning and achievement. To accomplish this, CNM needed to develop a culture of assessment. As one component of this process, plans were made to examine how closely

the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) outcomes corresponded with the college's general education (newly developed) and program-specific outcomes for the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Applied Science degrees. The college's current degree framework would be assessed, with the anticipation that this process would reveal the extent to which students met the standards expressed via the college's own outcomes and, by extension, the DQP. There were also plans to specifically investigate how closely the expectations of the DQP's two-year degree outcomes synchronized with the college's expectations

for student achievement in terms of coursework, critical thinking, co-curricular activities, and standardized assessment. As this work unfolded, it was likely that gaps in the alignment between CNM's outcomes and the DQP would emerge. These gaps would help determine whether items should be included in CNM's outcomes or recommendations made to Lumina regarding additions/deletions to the DQP.

Goals

- Map CNM's general education and degree program outcomes to the DQP.
- Identify, analyze, and evaluate any gaps between CNM's outcomes and the DQP to determine whether the differences warrant changes within CNM or recommendations for DQP revisions.
- Gather assessment activity results (the first reporting of these results under the new system was for the 2011–2012 academic year) as a starting point for developing baseline data.

People Involved

The task of effectively formalizing assessment required college-wide participation from administration, faculty members, and staff members. Leaders of this assessment initiative include SAAC, the dean's liaison to SAAC, the vice president of Academic Affairs, and the academic curriculum coordinator. The project team utilized the following resources to help achieve the project goals: an online planning tool, online surveys, workshops and training for faculty members, faculty forums, and inclusion of assessment into the New Faculty Institute (NFI). Going forward, the Office of Academic Affairs will be responsible for sustaining outcomes assessment and integration of changes based on that assessment and will also provide assistance for data management and assessment design.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The project team examined general education assessment reports, degree program assessment reports, employer survey results, and faculty input to inform the mapping of outcomes to the DQP and the DQP outcomes

to the college's outcomes for the purpose of isolating and exploring areas of disconnect.

Most of CNM's general education outcomes found a match within the DQP; however, three DQP areas were missing in CNM's general education outcomes: Specialized Knowledge, Applied Learning and Civic Learning. Specialized Knowledge was included in CNM's program outcomes. With Applied Learning, the area of disconnect was in the outcome that required written demonstration of technical skills, and the team thought the DQP was too prescriptive in the wording of this outcome. Similarly, with Civic Learning, the area of disconnect was in the specification that each student "[t]ake an active role in a community context," something the team thought was too prescriptive for practical implementation at a college as large as CNM.

Present in CNM's general education outcomes but absent from the DQP were Computer Literacy, Critical Thinking, and Life Skills/Teamwork. Results of employer surveys supported inclusion of Computer Literacy and Life Skills/Teamwork in CNM's general education outcomes. When revising CNM's general education outcomes during 2010–2011, faculty members identified Critical Thinking as an expectation for a CNM graduate.

Most Important Findings

This project, along with CNM's own assessment efforts, has worked to create a culture of assessment at CNM. This culture emphasizes that the purpose of assessment is to improve student learning. By ensuring that conversations about student outcomes occur on a routine basis, CNM hopes to improve the chances that every student graduate will be equipped for success in the chosen field of study.

The DQP program mapping activity caused program administrators to question/reevaluate their outcomes, and CNM expects to continue to use it as a tool to ensure that the college's general education and program outcomes will meet national expectations.

In addition to the cultural emphasis, the DQP project has broadened awareness of national education expectations and initiatives among faculty members. It has also initiated discussion at CNM's Academic Affairs

Council regarding outcomes-based, as opposed to credit-hour-based, degrees.

CNM has settled on three major findings as a result of this DQP project. The first is that the DQP serves well as a tool to encourage dialogue both within and between institutions of higher education. The second is that few

but significant gaps exist between what CNM values and emphasizes as general education outcomes and what the DQP proposes. Finally, the DQP outcomes, as written, are too specific and prescriptive for broad adoption and do not allow enough latitude for individual institutional identity or emphasis.

CENTRAL WYOMING COLLEGE (*Riverton, Wyoming*)

Title of Project

DQP Matrix Evaluation

Overview

Central Wyoming College (CWC) utilized the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) areas of knowledge as a method to evaluate current general education requirements and student attributes as well as the program outcomes of the specific programs. The initial evaluation was to determine any gaps in program areas as well as to identify any gaps in the DQP areas of knowledge, and the mapping began with two degree programs: Criminal Justice and General Studies.

Goals

- Determine whether the DQP areas of learning are met in the college's associate's-level programs.
- Determine which items are met that are not present in the DQP.
- Determine how general education requirements and student attributes contribute to the DQP areas of learning.

People Involved

Efforts related to the DQP were under the direction and guidance of the executive vice president for Student and Academic Services. The associate vice president for Academic Services has coordinated the evaluation of the DQP and participation in the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Pathway Pioneer project. A dean, professor of criminal justice, and professor of English served as the lead faculty members for the programs, participating in the review and evaluation of the DQP.

Curriculum and policy revisions made as a result of participation in the DQP evaluation project involved the members of the CAP Committee, SAS, and CWC administration. All changes were vetted through the entire faculty and all academic divisions. In-service and staff development activities were held so that all faculty and staff members could offer input.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

CWC has benefited significantly from participation in the evaluation of the DQP. It has enriched the process of general education review and provided insight into areas that might need to be enhanced. It satisfies the college's Quality Initiative in the Open Pathway for reaffirmation of accreditation while allowing participation in initial stages of a national movement for accountability.

Specifically, as a result of discovering the college's limited emphasis on Civic Learning, the spring 2012 in-service was dedicated to recognizing current co-curricular offerings and identifying additional activities to provide Civic Learning and Engagement opportunities. During the subsequent year, in-service and staff development activities focused on refining and defining the new general education requirement. Co-curricular Learning will require two credits from the following three areas: Cultural Appreciation, Community Engagement, and Professional/Practical Experience.

Most Important Findings

- The most important finding for CWC during the mapping and gap analysis was the recognition of a deficiency in Civic Learning.
- Many CWC students, particularly in the applied

degrees, were gaining greater depth in the Specialized Knowledge area of learning.

- The mapping process has prompted a further

move into individual courses to identify unique assessments that provide support for having met the area of knowledge.

COCHISE COLLEGE (*Douglas, Arizona*)

Title of Project

Degree Qualification Profile—Cochise College

Overview

The original project at Cochise College comprised six activities that emphasized comparisons with existing Cochise general education outcomes and assessment efforts with the outcomes of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). These activities were established by the Accreditation Committee and included comparing current college general education outcomes and related assessments with the DQP, as well as evaluating approaches to assessing a cross section of the DQP outcomes.

Goals

- Determine alignment of DQP with college transfer and career program outcomes.
- Develop/implement/evaluate assessment processes for the DQP outcomes.
- Test practical applicability to transfer to career programs (Associate of Applied Science [AAS] degrees).
- Develop/test assessment and approaches.

People Involved

The project was led by the members of the Accreditation Committee. A wide variety of faculty members, staff members, and administrators participated in the six activities, some of which were held on faculty and staff development days. Other activities involved the Assessment Review Group and instructors in the pilot courses testing DQP assessment methods.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

Participation in the DQP project allowed the college to take a comprehensive look at how it assesses

general education outcomes. Its current model allows departments to choose an outcome to assess during the regular assessment cycle. As a result, only a few outcomes were chosen. As part of a new effort by the Assessment Committee to provide more uniformity to the college's grassroots approach to general education assessment, outcomes will be randomly assigned to departments at this fall's convocation. All six of the outcomes will be spread across the department/programs to get comparable efforts for each outcome instead of most efforts supporting only two or three of the outcomes. Based on the college's experiences with the DQP outcomes, discussions will also be held to foster a more common college-wide interpretation of the outcomes.

Most Important Findings

- In general, faculty members found some value to the DQP and the review of the DQP on faculty and staff development days produced a number of potential benefits.
- A major issue was raised about using the DQP with applied science degrees—it was thought that many of the DQP outcomes, while attractive, are not realistic for students in many of these degree programs.
- The alignment of the DQP outcomes and the college general education outcomes was thought to be significant in several areas, such as communication and critical thinking, but was not very strong for such areas as technology literacy and creativity.
- One ironic observation regarding alignment was that while the Cochise College mission statement mentions opportunities that lead to constructive citizenship, and the college is very active in service-learning, there are no specific general education outcomes that address this—but there are specific

outcomes addressing this in the Civic Learning area of the DQP.

- Another significant finding showed that very few of the college's current general education assessment projects are measuring learning related to the DQP outcomes.
- The standardization of assessment methods using the

DQP model appeared to create some apprehension.

- Implementing and assessing several of the DQP category outcomes from the areas such as Specialized Knowledge, Broad, Integrative Knowledge, and Applied Learning was a relatively straightforward process. Implementing and assessing the selected outcome from the Intellectual Skills area proved to be more difficult.

HARDING UNIVERSITY (*Searcy, Arkansas*)

Title of Project

Degree Profile Mapping Project: HU, Higher Education, Quality, Assessment and the Future

Overview

Concurrent with the implementation of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) initiative, Harding University was undertaking major revisions to its program review criteria. Therefore, it was decided to use the DQP in a broad and systematic way to ascertain meaningful information regarding the university's degree programs and how programs compared to the DQP. Using a custom template developed in-house, data was gathered on thirty-two different bachelor's and master's degree programs. Every college (except the College of Pharmacy, which only offers a professional doctoral degree) participated in mapping selected degree programs against the DQP. Some mapped several degrees, including those at both the bachelor's and master's levels. There was a sixth category developed to address the emphasis of the mission across the curriculum. Using the university's mission statement and input from a number of stakeholders, six outcomes were crafted under the category Spiritual Formation.

Goals

Lumina Feedback

- Provide feedback regarding the DQP itself to ensure that Harding University had a voice in shaping the DQP document.

Programmatic Feedback

- Compare current degree outcomes with those listed in the DQP as a way of either validating program quality or identifying gaps within a program's scope.
- At the program and college level, foster discussions regarding the rationale for matches and discrepancies between the DQP and the university's degree programs.
- Each program would be able to use the data to identify areas where it could aim for improvement as part of its five-year Academic Planning and Program Review (APPR).

People Involved

The original curriculum mapping project involved faculty members from every college and department on campus. Harding University's three university-level academic advisory committees also provided a venue for feedback and discussion. The online survey, a collaborative effort with the university's Office of Alumni Affairs, was sent to thousands of constituents, including trustees, faculty members, staff members, parents, employers, and students. There were more than thirteen hundred responses.

Taking into account both the mapping exercise and the survey, the university had 100 percent participation among the Provost Council, deans, chairs, and program directors, as well as more than 60 percent participation from faculty members. Including those who participated in the mapping exercise and those who responded to

the survey, more than fifteen hundred stakeholders participated in this project.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The timing of this exercise proved to be extremely helpful. The university had recently completed a liberal arts curriculum mapping to identify in every department the courses that addressed each component of the liberal arts curriculum, and the College of Bible and Ministry had recently completed an extensive mapping of its curriculum as the college revised its outcomes and integrated them into a new curriculum. The timing of this project also coincided with the revamping of the General Studies major and with efforts in reworking the university's program review process. As work on this project dovetailed with these efforts, it added depth and breadth to the discussions as they related to assessment, curriculum development, program review, degree quality, and evaluation. This new perspective enriched ongoing discussions.

Most Important Findings

- The most important finding is a reaffirmation that Harding University is a mission-driven educational organization. This project validated the university's commitment to integrating its mission and highlighted the profoundly important influence of faculty and staff members.

- The university's constituents know its mission well.
- That mission cannot be disaggregated to fit the DQP template.
- The university's constituents know its Liberal Arts curriculum well.
- The DQP expectation of mastery in a "second academic field" is problematic.
- There is broad agreement regarding the importance of every Harding graduate successfully completing a capstone course (or experience) in his/her major area of study.
- Degree quality was confirmed or gaps were identified.
- The updated foundation being laid by the curriculum revision in the College of Bible and Ministry needs to be more widely shared.
- Service-learning or volunteerism cannot and should not be forced.
- The university needs to add a capstone assessment component for its General Studies majors.
- Modifications to the university's program review process will be enriched by the conversations started by the DQP.
- The complexity and redundancy of the DQP must be addressed.

HASTINGS COLLEGE (*Hastings, Nebraska*)

Title of Project

My HC—Making Your Hastings Connections

Overview

This project's first phase involved modifying Hastings College's (HC) First-Year Experience (FYE) for all new students, beginning with the cohort entering in fall 2012. The aim was to develop a program that clearly articulated learning outcomes, that was assessable, and that created shared experiences for all HC students. The second phase of the project involved revising the college's Liberal

Arts Program (LAP, the college's general education curriculum) so that it was more outcomes-based (using the Degree Qualifications Profile [DQP] outcomes to help frame the discussion), so that it was integrated throughout students' entire career at HC, and so that it connected to all areas of their campus experience, from their major program to their lives outside of the classroom.

Goals

The initial project used the DQP as the impetus for modifying HC's entire general education program,

including the college's FYE and LAP. As a part of this process, the following overarching goals for the LAP were developed:

- Students will demonstrate and understand the interdisciplinary nature of the liberal arts.
- Students will demonstrate quantitative/math skills and analytical abilities.
- Students will demonstrate communication abilities (oral, written, and technological).
- Students will demonstrate and articulate personal values and their place in a local and global community.
- Students will demonstrate effective learning and citizenship in society.
- Students will demonstrate connections between the core curriculum and the major curriculum.

People Involved

Faculty members, staff members, administration (particularly in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs), and students have been involved in this project. Specifically, there is a standing Continual Improvement and Assessment Committee, a Curriculum Committee, and a First-Year Experience Coordinating Committee, the members of which represent several parts of campus (Admissions, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, students, faculty members). All faculty members have engaged the DQP and this process at minimum during Faculty Senate retreats in August 2011 and August 2012. Approximately 50 percent of faculty members were involved in the development and/or the implementation of some part of the project.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The major result of the college's Quality Initiative is the development of a process for continuous improvement of the college's general education curriculum and, specifically, the FYE. The Quality Initiative has provided the college with the incentive, structure, opportunity, and timing necessary to overhaul and revise its general education program. Without the incentive structure and the DQP itself, what has been accomplished since June

2011 could not have been realized. The DQP provided an opportunity to think differently about how the general education program is structured and how the college knows (and can demonstrate) what students are learning.

Most Important Findings

- Given the incentive, faculty members, staff members, and administration can work well together.
- The college has a better sense of its academic values and a better sense of where those values are truly implemented in practice and where they might not be implemented as much as would be desirable.
- The college's decisions about what to do for students and how best to do it need to be more intentional.
- This process has forced a discussion about what students should learn, and unsurprisingly, there are a variety of viewpoints, some of which conflict. These conflicts might not be easy to resolve but they can be worked out in ways that are both enlightening and productive.
- The college shares many of the values of the Lumina Foundation, especially when it comes to:
 1. An interdisciplinary approach to higher education
 2. An emphasis on outcomes
 3. The importance of civic engagement and learning
 4. The dual importance of skills and content in students' education
- The college needs to continue to strive for a general education program—the LAP—that is outcomes-based and assessable.
- The strong focus on interdisciplinarity in the DQP has been particularly important for HC as a liberal arts college.
- The college's new FYE and general education program require a great deal of coordination across multiple parts of campus, particularly Academic Affairs and Student Affairs.

HENRY FORD COMMUNITY COLLEGE *(Detroit, Michigan)*

Title of Project

Comprehensive Curriculum Review and Reform: C2 R2

Overview

As part of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) initiative, Henry Ford Community College (HFCC) undertook three campus-wide projects. The “bottoms up” approach began with a review of all course masters (the official archived record of each course); followed by a program review needed to update all HFCC associate’s degree program learning outcomes (PLOs), completion of curriculum maps for all courses, PLOs, and DQP outcomes; and progressed upward toward student completion by reviewing general education outcomes and associate’s degree programs. Several professional development sessions were held to accomplish these tasks and fully review the DQP.

Goals

- Determine how the DQP aligned to HFCC programs.
- Gain feedback as to the clarity of expectations provided by the DQP.
- Determine if the DQP could provide a framework for the implementation of institutional learning outcomes.
- Utilize the DQP project as a catalyst for professional development and the reexamination of assessment of student learning.

People Involved

The original DQP core team members included the vice president of Academic Affairs for Arts & Sciences; vice president of Academic Affairs for Career & Technical Education; director of Institutional Research, Planning and Effectiveness; the associate dean for Social Sciences; and four faculty members. Each faculty member also served in another role at HFCC, including as co-chair of the Committee for Assessment of Student Learning: General Education; co-chair of the Committee for Assessment of Student Learning: Programs;

coordinator of Retention; or director for the Center for Teaching Excellence & Innovation.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

Before the college began this DQP project, there was no formal process for reviewing and improving its associate’s degree programs, but the DQP has been instrumental in helping initiate discussions that have led to a more structured review process. The DQP refocused HFCC faculty members on outcomes assessment, raised the bar of expectation for the college’s program graduates, and updated and improved programs.

Most Important Findings

- The DQP could be used as a catalyst for general education reform.
- Mapping DQP outcomes to student learning, curricula, and pedagogy could be an excellent way to implement continuous improvement as a gap-analysis and planning tool.
- The DQP can be used as a springboard to link with other initiatives to focus on both co-curricular and curricular learning.
- The DQP prompts a robust dialogue on learning with some new twists and could be used as a catalyst for general education reform.
- The DQP requires learning that may not be relevant to some institutions or degrees, has too many overlaps in learning expected, or leaves out learning that should be relevant to all.
- The DQP may not sufficiently reflect the learning outcomes of all associate’s degrees.
- Implementation of the DQP could enhance and extend current initiatives already underway at institutions.
- The DQP brings teaching, learning, assessment, and program review together in good ways.
- The DQP prompts a culture shift toward a common understanding of degrees.

ILLINOIS COLLEGE (*Jacksonville, Illinois*)

Title of Project

Civic Learning, the BLUEprint, and the Degree Qualifications Profile

Overview

Illinois College (IC) proposed a three-pronged test of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP): (1) Testing the Civic Engagement DQP standards through courses in the Leadership Program; (2) Testing the Master's Level DQP standards through assessment of student performance in the Master's in Education program; and (3) Testing most of the DQP standards through assessment of all art courses. Along the way, IC's Pathway Project team also participated in a conversation with faculty members about how to assess IC's new BLUEprint general education program.

Goals

- Provide opportunities for assessing the DQP, especially civic learning
- Enhance IC's ability to provide meaningful and effective civic learning
- Engage in a comparison with other institutions testing the DQP
- Gather baseline data on the extent of students' civic learning and other DQP outcomes

People Involved

On campus, a five-person team consisting of faculty members and administrators designed and implemented IC's test of the DQP and assumed primary responsibility for educating the faculty about the document. As a small liberal arts college, Illinois College employs a relatively small number of faculty members—103 members this year, including 80 full-time members and 23 part-time members. Of the 80 full-time faculty members, 44 of them, or 55 percent, have engaged substantively with the DQP and this testing of the DQP. Some opportunities for engagement included the Opening Faculty Conference at the beginning of each academic year, the Leadership Program, the Graduate Program Committee, the

Curriculum Review Committee, rubric teams, and summer workshops.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

Illinois College has been in pursuit of effective assessment practices, and the Pathway project occurred at an opportune time for the campus because its new general education program (the BLUEprint) was created during the 2009–2012 period and started in the fall 2012 semester. The DQP is one of the best solutions to the problem of creating all-campus/college-wide assessments, and IC's engagement will continue to expand as more rubric teams begin their work. IC's faculty has already adopted assessment rubrics that were directly influenced by the DQP for all civic learning and speaking-intensive courses; a rubric for writing-intensive courses will be voted on at an upcoming faculty meeting. In summer 2014, IC's three-week summer workshop on civic learning and service-learning will ensure that civic learning remains an expanding area of focus for IC's faculty and curriculum.

Most Important Findings

- Illinois College believes that the individual learning standards established in the DQP generally are the right ones for higher education. The level of rigor implied by many of the objectives within the areas of learning is generally appropriate for the degree level. However, there is a need for substantial dialogue between elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions and for much closer cooperation between them to achieve the most ambitious learning objectives.
- Rubrics for grading and assessment are necessary to operationalize the goals of the DQP.
- The rubrics for different areas of learning in the DQP do not need to be identical in content and structure, but within each specific area (e.g., Civic Learning), faculty members should use a common rubric.

- From a faculty development standpoint, the DQP is a useful catalyst for getting faculty members to think about the rationales for their curricular and course designs.
- Using the DQP areas of learning for departmental and program assessment often results in changes to and improvements of course assignments.
- Informing students about the DQP framework is an important step if the DQP's learning objectives are affecting course curricula and assessments of student learning.
- In a future draft of the DQP, there should be more attention paid to presentation skills and communications and the inclusion of ethics.

KANSAS CITY KANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE (*Kansas City, Kansas*)

Title of Project

Minding your DQPs: Curriculum Mapping and Assessment

Overview

Kansas City Kansas Community College (KCKCC) implemented a new assessment and reporting system as its Quality Initiative proposal for the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) project. When completed, this system will enable the college to collect data on students' performances on the learning outcomes of the courses they took and to generate a report down to the level of each competency in each learning outcome in each course taken by any student. Through this process of curriculum mapping, the college will be able to align the competencies and learning outcomes in each course with the appropriate DQP item. From there, the college will be able to summarize the assessment data and determine how students have performed on that particular DQP item.

Goals

- Merge the DQP outcomes with the college's existing twenty-first-century learning outcomes for adoption as KCKCC's college-wide learning outcomes.
- Build a database of curriculum mapping.
- Build an assessment and reporting system that will allow the college to collect assessment data, analyze program curricula, and create reports on student learning outcomes on the DQP.
- Close the loop on assessment by taking necessary

steps to adjust the curricula and course learning outcomes based on the reviews and analyses of the reports.

People Involved

Many people were involved in this project. The vice president for Academic Affairs and the dean of Institutional Services spearheaded the project and fostered its progression. The members of the Deans Council provided support when needed. The academic deans played a role by reminding faculty members to complete the task of aligning course competencies with DQP competencies and submit their assessment reports in a timely manner. The KCKCC web master assisted with creating a presence for the project on the KCKCC website. Faculty members played a crucial role in moving this project forward, because without their input, the project would not have experienced this measure of success. Finally, although not directly involved in the project, the KCKCC president and board of trustees encouraged and supported the project efforts each time they received a regular update on its progress from the vice president for Academic Affairs.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

KCKCC now has the following:

1. A complete database of learning outcomes and corresponding competencies of all courses
2. A complete curriculum mapping database that details which courses with which competencies address the DQP learning outcomes

3. A system that collects class-embedded assessment data on each competency from all courses
4. A “close the loop” process that archives faculty members’ reviews on assessment data and their assessment plan for the following year

The most important result and biggest accomplishment of the project is that by combining all the products mentioned above, KCKCC can now create a report that details the profiles of individual graduates in terms of DQP learning outcomes and their performance indices on each DQP item. Perhaps the biggest difference that DQP made to the campus is that it has helped to install and cultivate a culture of assessment. Before the DQP pilot, KCKCC was making little progress on assessment. Participation in this pilot has acted as a catalyst for the institution’s increased engagement with assessment.

Most Important Findings

The DQP project has provided a number of valuable lessons that are applicable to other initiatives:

- **Strong Support and Commitment from the Administration:** The role the administration played made a significant difference in terms of moving the assessment project forward.
- **Honesty, Clarity of Purpose, and a Demonstrated Enthusiasm for a Project:** These factors contributed to the project’s success. The success of this initiative hinged on faculty participation, so the project team members were clear with them about the significance of the initiative to the institution,

about why it needed to be done, about their role in its implementation, and about the value of their contribution.

- **Expansion of an Existing Institutional Initiative:** A significant factor that contributed to the success of this project is that the DQP merged easily with the college’s existing 21st Century Learning Outcomes. The pilot could be presented as a continuation of something already being done and not as a new initiative—a factor that made it more palatable to faculty members.
- **Simplification of the Process:** As much as possible, an administration should make every effort to simplify a new initiative and break it down into manageable tasks.
- **Accelerated Process:** Rather than asking faculty members to perform a specific task and have it linger for a period of several months, it was preferable to designate a day and time for conducting a workshop to accomplish the required task.
- **Express Appreciation:** At every opportunity, it is important to acknowledge faculty members’ contributions and express appreciation for their efforts and time.
- **Regular Updates and Progress Reports:** It is crucial to keep faculty members informed throughout the initiative—to keep the project alive; to show it moving forward; and to demonstrate how their role and contribution at each step is invaluable in making progress.

MACALESTER COLLEGE (*St. Paul, Minnesota*)

Title of Project

Macalester College Statement of Student Learning and the Lumina Degree Qualifications Profile: Convergences and Conflicts

Overview

Macalester College’s Quality Initiative project

focused on comparing aspects of the Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) to relevant learning goals expected of Macalester’s graduates. The project served as a logical extension of institution-wide work already under way at Macalester to articulate both curricular and co-curricular learning that students should acquire by graduation.

Goals

- Compare Macalester's Statement of Student Learning (SSL) to an external conceptualization of baccalaureate education.
- Increase knowledge about how Macalester fits into national dialogues about specialized knowledge and civic learning in higher education.
- Deepen conversation and collaboration both within and across Macalester's Academic and Student Affairs Division.

People Involved

A wide-ranging group of individuals from the Macalester community (i.e., faculty members, staff members, students, alumni, board of trustees members) was involved in the first step of the Quality Initiative project through a variety of methods. The second part of the project explicitly comparing the two SSL goals to their respective DQP counterparts involved the SLC (Student Learning Committee), which consisted of senior staff (associate dean of the faculty), faculty (director of the Center for Scholarship and Teaching; Educational Policy and Governance Committee representative; General Education Requirements Committee representative), staff (Campus Assessment Facilitator; Institutional Research Office representative; Library director), student affairs administrators (dean of students, associate dean of students), alumni, and students.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The project's most outstanding result for Macalester is the creation of the SSL. One cannot overstate the importance of having an official college document that clearly draws on Macalester's mission and articulates the learning that students should acquire through the entirety of their college experience, whether in or out of the classroom. Also, the SSL can enable faculty members and staff members within or between departments/offices to better understand how their individual efforts should link to the college's collective aims.

Most Important Findings

- The SSL emphasized the necessity of comparing intended student learning to what students are actually able to demonstrate by the time of graduation.
- The SSL has prompted conversations between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs departments/offices in a way that has not happened so frequently in the past.
- Creating the SSL has reinforced the vitality of Macalester's core commitments to scholarship, internationalism, multiculturalism, and service to society.
- Macalester's Quality Initiative project allowed the college to compare its understanding of undergraduate education based on its mission to external conceptualizations of a bachelor's degree.

MARIAN UNIVERSITY (*Indianapolis, Indiana*)

Title of Project

Evaluation of DQP and Applicability to Marian University

Overview

Marian University initially proposed a project that would investigate the application of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) learning objectives to the existing general education goals and curriculum, followed

by the extension of the same learning objectives to four pilot major programs. The faculty altered the project to include all major degree programs as the initial step, followed by the investigation of the university's general education program.

Goals

- Evaluate every major and its set of learning objectives with respect to the framework and

learning objectives of the beta version of the DQP.

- Develop a common understanding of the learning objectives of the DQP as well as the common vocabulary necessary to discuss the shared co-curricular nature of the general education core.
- Compare the existing Marian University general education core learning objectives to those recommended by the DQP beta version.
- Evaluate the grid for use as a tool in updating and improving the existing general education curricular learning objectives.
- Investigate ways in which the DQP learning objectives could be used to jump-start creation and assessment of learning objectives in co- and extracurricular activities on the campus and in experiential learning.
- Evaluate the DQP learning objectives as to the appropriate to the level of education, and provide feedback to Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

People Involved

This project was a significant focus of time and energy for the Marian leadership team, but the revision of the project into an examination of each major program meant that every department spent time and effort as a faculty group on the examination of their programmatic learning objectives. Each of these department efforts was primarily steered by the director of Teaching and Learning, assisted by the Teaching and Learning Committee, a group of seventeen faculty members from across the disciplines of the institution. This committee was joined in its efforts by the General Education Committee.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

Because of the broad nature of the revised project, there are many different accomplishments that can be shared. The university added an institution-specific sixth anchor line to the existing five as proposed originally by the authors of the DQP. This sixth strand is mission-driven and has been titled Faith, Ethics, and Foundations of Thought. The strongest impact this project has had

on the institution is that every program on the campus, and every new program developed on the campus, has a full set of major specific learning outcomes with assessments. In addition, by first examining the DQP through major-specific evaluations, Marian University was able to develop a platform of common language and understanding of the goals presented in the DQP. This in turn allowed the institution to begin a conversation about general education goals and learning objectives that involved the entire faculty.

Most Important Findings

- The faculty members of some majors on campus had not developed learning objectives for their disciplines.
- The work has sharpened the existing learning outcomes and assessment effort on the campus because it has begun to introduce a twist to the way of thinking about the focus of higher education. This evolving focus on assessment of what and how a student learns the material rather than how or what the faculty member teaches is going to be a long-term project nationally as faculty members reexamine the lens through which they view their success as teachers.
- Most revealing were the concerns this process generated about the existing silo nature of the curriculum and the challenges of learning assessment outside of the regular curriculum.
- The project was revealing in that there are so many possibilities for expansion of the assessment of the experiences available, and in some cases necessary, to the student, both in co-curricular and extracurricular ways.
- As a result of participation in this project, Marian University found only one part of one learning objective in the DQP that it cannot support: the last of the baccalaureate-level Intellectual Skills that expects a student to “Construct . . . argument or presentation . . . in more than one language. . . .” This is not a realistic expectation of a bachelor’s-level graduate.

Title of Project

Understanding the Meaning of a Marshall University Degree: Connecting and Assessing Course and Program Learning Outcomes to the Degree Qualifications Profile

Overview

Marshall University tested the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) through a process of mapping, revising, and assessing the level and extent of learning outcomes achievement via the following activities at the baccalaureate and master's levels. Each degree program:

- Identified a subset of courses (three to five) that provided its students with exposure to program learning outcomes and the opportunity to practice, develop, and demonstrate the competencies required to realize those outcomes in the program's culminating experience
- Conducted an initial review of the extent to which the current learning outcomes for that subset of courses mapped to its program outcomes and to the DQP
- Restated its course learning outcomes based on its initial review and mapping
- Completed a general mapping of course learning outcomes with program-level outcomes and restated its program outcomes in relation to the integration of and alignment with the DQP outcomes

And, collectively, the university developed a DQP for Marshall's baccalaureate degree and is in the process of developing a DQP at the master's level.

Goals

- Use the DQP to help Marshall University critically examine its expected learning outcomes for students in each degree program and at each degree level.
- Examine the extent to which the broad areas of learning, and degree-appropriate outcomes outlined in the DQP, align with outcomes expected of

students who graduate with associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees (in each degree program) from Marshall University.

- Examine the reasons for any identified lack of alignment between Marshall's and the DQP's degree expectations.
- Point out where the DQP does not include outcomes Marshall University faculty members think are necessary for the well-educated Marshall graduate at each degree level.
- Provide feedback to the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) and to the Lumina Foundation for the purpose of improving the DQP.
- Develop a DQP unique to Marshall University.

People Involved

All activities involved the Open Pathway Project Steering Committee, the academic deans, associate deans, department chairs, program directors, and faculty of each degree program. The online systems/web developer for Academic Affairs developed a website, <http://www.marshall.edu/hlcopenpathways/>, dedicated to Marshall's Quality Initiative, along with an online reporting system for use by degree programs.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

1. The proposal to revise Marshall's core domains of critical thinking, and to adopt baccalaureate-level learning outcomes for each, was adopted by the Faculty Senate and signed by the university's president in January 2013. The adoption of the Marshall University Baccalaureate Degree Profile will result in important changes to the university's delivery and assessment of general education and the baccalaureate degree programs.
2. Testing the DQP resulted in each degree program evaluating the degree-level appropriateness of its outcomes and modifying them as appropriate. Each program also developed assessment rubrics for each outcome and determined in which courses (or

other learning experiences) and by what methods each outcome would be assessed.

3. Marshall University developed an online assessment reporting system.
4. Testing the DQP allowed Marshall University to make significant progress in strengthening teaching and student learning, but it must be stressed that this effort is still in its formative stage. The university's final report to the Higher Learning Commission outlines specific future plans to strengthen student learning in both the general education and degree program components of Marshall's curriculum and to develop a DQP at the graduate level.

Most Important Findings

As the Steering Committee reflected on this project and studied feedback from a survey completed by faculty members on Assessment Day 2013, several themes emerged:

- The importance of **intentionality** in designing student learning experiences across courses: The required linkages among course outcomes and how students practice and instructors assess these outcomes in the master syllabus template has resulted in faculty members more intentionally

designing student learning experiences within and across courses.

- The importance of widespread **participation** in the project: The procedures in place to test the DQP fostered wide faculty participation in this project.
- The importance of providing **structure** to degree programs as they tested the DQP
- The importance of the Quality Initiative in helping the university to improve **academic quality** and **enhance its standards**: Some individuals noted that the "real benefits" to higher education of having a DQP include that a DQP (1) encourages comprehensive review of the curriculum; (2) provides a vehicle for higher education to achieve excellence; and (3) has the potential to improve student learning through setting clear expectations, encouraging self-reflection and demonstrating outcomes.
- The importance of **connecting students' learning experience** to expectations of the Marshall University DQP: This should entail a move away from "covering" material to providing students with meaningful opportunities to practice the skills the university deems important, as articulated in its DQP.

MIAMI UNIVERSITY (*Oxford, Ohio*)

Title of Project

Miami University and the Degree Qualifications Profile: Significant Conversations, Significant Assignments

Overview

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the value of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), the project team employed two distinct but interrelated approaches to explore its relevance for the university's students and educators. One enabled a broad sense of team members' perceptions of the usefulness of the DQP (focus groups). The other gave team members insight into how DQP outcomes are put into practice (workshops on significant assignments).

Goals

- Gain insight into whether and in what ways the DQP outcomes match the expectations, current practice, or future goals of Miami faculty members, students, parents, and support staff.
- Use university discussions about the DQP as a means of honing the institutional mission and advancing the assessment culture across the university.
- Apply data gathered on the DQP to guide curricular revision, particularly revision of Miami's general education curriculum.

- Communicate findings to the Lumina Foundation and the Higher Learning Commission for use in revising the DQP and evaluating its usefulness as a tool for accreditation.

People Involved

Miami University appointed the interim associate provost and the director of the Center for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and University Assessment to lead the Improvement process (including the Quality Initiative) of the Open Pathway accreditation model. They oversaw the design and implementation of the Quality Initiative project, conducted the focus group sessions and workshops, gave public presentations, and developed the final report. In addition, a variety of faculty members, staff members, and graduate students participated on the committee or provided further support and assistance. Faculty members, staff members, students, and parents participated in the focus groups, and seventeen faculty members participated in the Assessment Workshop and Outcomes Comparison Study.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The conversations fostered in the DQP focus groups and workshops were pivotal in advancing a culture of assessment at Miami. In 2011, less than 10 percent of undergraduate degree programs and less than 5 percent of graduate degree programs had assessment plans. By the time the Quality Initiative project was concluded in spring 2013, 100 percent of undergraduate programs and more than 80 percent had full-cycle assessment plans and were in the process of collecting data related to their student learning outcomes.

The DQP provided a point of reference and comparison to faculty members' learning objectives, assessment plans, and assumptions about the relationship of different degree levels to one another. For those faculty members who were in the process of developing or revising their assessment plans, the DQP outcomes served as a starting point for formulating student learning outcomes.

Most Important Findings

The findings reveal some important insights into and perceptions of the Miami University curriculum and co-curriculum, which will be critical in assisting the institution in reforming the university's general education program. Some of the key findings that may be relevant to the reform of the liberal education plan include:

- Faculty members and students do not perceive Miami's liberal education outcomes as distinct from those advanced in the major.
- Faculty members and students do not clearly perceive quantitative literacy, intensive writing, intercultural understanding, integrative learning, applied or experiential learning, and civic learning as being promoted across the university.
- Students seem to value project-based, integrative, and experiential learning, while faculty members have concerns related to it or do not perceive themselves as promoting it.
- Out-of-class and co-curricular experiences are not leveraged as purposefully as they could be to advance learning.

NEW MEXICO JUNIOR COLLEGE (*Hobbs, New Mexico*)

Title of Project

The Degree Qualifications Profile and Our Future: Connecting the Dots

Overview

Faculty members and leaders participating in the project at New Mexico Junior College (NMJC) believe

that evaluation of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) and resulting deployment of information and lessons learned has the potential to elevate the quality and relevance curriculum and learning at NMJC. This journey began with a robust process of engaging and listening to community members throughout the region and the state

of New Mexico. Two key research questions drove the conversations:

1. What do area leaders and citizens believe students need to know to be productive members of the economy and society?
2. Which parts of higher education, regardless of institution involved, are succeeding and which are falling short?

Goals

- Evaluate the relevance of the DQP model in the context of community statements.
- Identify the DQP model that is most appropriate for NMJC (or aspects of the Profile that can serve to guide effective curricular development and delivery).
- Evaluate the DQP and research findings in the context of one or two existing academic programs. (Note: Program evaluation was limited to one to two programs during the period of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Pathways project. NMJC is committed to expanding the evaluation process to all campus programs over coming years, well beyond the time frame of the project.)

People Involved

Project planning and activities were directed by a special DQP Committee composed of the director of Institutional Effectiveness, the dean of Training and Outreach, the vice president for Instruction, and two senior faculty members. Over a period of six to eight months, members of the NMJC DQP project committee engaged in an extensive series of community conversations that took many forms. Conversations engaged more than 250 individual participants; more than 20 community groups; and area employers, students, and faculty and staff members from area K–12 schools. In addition, conversations were held with state higher education leaders in Santa Fe and members of the New Mexico Legislature and their key staff.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

- The nature of campus conversations are changing,

with a renewed emphasis on degree completion, student success, and meeting community needs.

- Campus stakeholders are changing how they view their roles in student success and their responsibility for student persistence.
- There is an expanding awareness on campus that being a “good” institution may not be enough to meet the current and future needs of students.
- Conversations that are resulting from this process are contributing to a renewed emphasis on the future as opposed to suffocating immersion in daily operations.

Most Important Findings

- **Unintentional Filters:** The college curriculum and associated student support processes are creating screens that have the unintentional consequence of filtering students out of programs and courses before they have a chance to establish their interest and success in those programs.
- **The College Is Not Deeply Connected with the Community:** Although the college maintains many of the traditional community connections, such as advisory boards, participation in local civic and governmental groups, and other community engagement efforts, there is clear evidence from the DQP project that this participation is broad yet not deep.
- **Business as Usual Is Not Good Enough:** Long regarded as a good institution of higher education, it is more and more apparent that this is simply not enough to meet the needs of the community and the future needs of the local economy and society.
- **A Need to Deal with the Student as a Whole Person:** The community looks to higher education to help mold the whole person—who not only has specific skills and intellectual training but who also has a sense of behavior, community values, and a commitment to community engagement.
- **Validation of NMJC Institutional Learning Objectives:** The results of the DQP project support the current learning objectives NMJC adopted as part of the college plan for assessment of student learning.

Title of Project

DQP Initiative for Nicolet Area Technical College

Overview

Initial review of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) areas of learning revealed a strong correlation between the areas of learning and Nicolet College's institutional goals, called the core abilities. The goal of the original project was to map the DQP areas of learning to the core abilities and then assess how the DQP worked for both occupational and university transfer associate's degrees. After the initial training session for the Pathway Cohort Three Project, the team was struck by the fact that the Lumina Foundation was interested in extending the DQP down into secondary education and up into doctoral programs.

This interest resulted in a change to the project scope. Colleges in the WTCS offer three types of postsecondary credentials: technical diplomas, Associate of Applied Arts degrees, or Associate of Art or Associate of Science degrees for transfer to four-year institutions. Technical diploma programs have a lower level of rigor than associate's degrees; the team realized that if the DQP was designed for associate's degrees, applying the DQP areas of learning to a lower-rigor program would provide an opportunity to see if the DQP was sensitive to the difference in rigor. Thus, the project was changed to use the DQP in the Medical Assistant program (a one-year technical diploma) and the Associate of Arts university transfer program.

Goals

- Map the DQP areas of learning to the core abilities.
- Assess how the DQP worked for both occupational technical diploma and university transfer associate's degrees.
- Apply the DQP areas of learning to a lower-rigor program (technical diploma) to see if the DQP is sensitive to the difference in rigor.

People Involved

A wide-ranging group of individuals was involved in

the project, which was initially approved by the president and the vice president of Teaching, Learning, and Student Success. A DQP team was created that included the vice president of Teaching, Learning, and Student Success, an occupational program dean, a faculty member from University Transfer, and a faculty member from a health occupations program. The DQP team developed the deployment strategy and attended all Cohort training sessions. The DQP team provided initial training to all faculty and staff on the DQP and the Pathways process at the fall 2011 in-service. At the same in-service, all teaching faculty from occupational programs, general education, and University Transfer (along with deans and some non-teaching faculty, such as advisors and counselors) worked together in small groups to map the DQP outcomes to the Nicolet College core abilities.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The project had numerous positive impacts at Nicolet College. The project served to initiate a campus-wide conversation on the assessment of core abilities and cross-curricular learning objectives. In addition, there was extensive discussion on the adequacy of the DQP criteria as a measure of the level of competence for an associate's degree. Over the course of the project, as an institution, Nicolet College has continued to engage in conversation on the adequacy of all of the outcomes for the college's associate's degree candidates.

The work done with DQP dovetailed nicely with work in the curriculum management system and followed work with the core abilities. Thus, the combination of the three efforts definitely advanced the college's understanding of how students are being guided to be able to master those outcomes. Deep engagement with faculty members and administrators offered more help than other efforts had.

Following are key outcomes from the project:

1. In some cases the DQP criteria were too specific and precluded mapping to course competencies that may in fact meet the intended DQP outcome.
2. DQP criteria that contained multiple verbs proved

a significant challenge for mapping to program outcomes.

3. Faculty members found it difficult to determine the appropriate level for the standard: introduced, practiced, or assessed.

Most Important Findings

- The fundamental idea of a framework as a way to communicate the differences between associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees to someone who is not an educator makes sense. However, the language in the DQP document is so opaque and jargon-ridden that there is no way a college could hand the DQP to most parents and have them understand the differences. The language is not clear enough.
- There seems to be an inherent bias in the DQP that when a student earns an associate's degree, he or

she will not stop there; that student is going on for a bachelor's degree. That is not always the case. However, the DQP is written to assume students will make that progression.

- Finally, the rigor of the DQP is too low, especially with university transfer associate's degrees; it is known that those are at baccalaureate rigor because those students are going to transfer. So it appears that the associate's degree outcomes do not have quite the right mix between occupational associate's degrees and transfer associate's degrees. At the same time, the Lumina Foundation is on the right track: When the associate's degree areas of learning were applied to a lower-rigor technical diploma, the data clearly showed that the technical diploma was lower rigor by the way it matched up against the associate's degree outcomes.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE (*Wahpeton, North Dakota*)

Title of Project

Employer Engagement: From Better to Best - Two Colleges' Collaborative Approach

Overview

North Dakota State College of Science (NDS) collaborated with a peer institution, Alexandria Community and Technical College (ATCC), in attaining input from leading employers in the region. This data helped NDS better understand the needs of its stakeholders and provide programming that meets the needs of students and employers. As an Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) institution with an emphasis on career and technical education, NDS provided input on the alignment of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) framework with employer expectations, student learning outcomes, and assessment of student learning in five programs awarding an associate's degree.

Goals

- Gather input from business and industry regarding the DQP and use that input to evaluate and

improve selected NDS program areas.

- Validate the DQP, particularly as it relates to the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree, provide input to the Higher Learning Commission on findings, and have an impact on the ultimate result of this project.

People Involved

The entire campus was informed of NDS's participation in this project. A subcommittee led by the associate vice president for Institutional Effectiveness was formed. This group, which included the president, vice president for Academic and Student Affairs, and the academic deans from each division, met with ATCC administration to develop and implement the first phase of this project. Faculty members from five occupational clusters were brought into the project and invited to attend the employer focus groups. The faculty members from these programs then reviewed the DQP, student learning outcomes, and curriculum to determine degree of alignment. Employers were involved through the

focus groups as well as those who serve on Advisory Committees to gather their input. The president reviewed the project with campus leadership and at all-campus meetings a number of times during the year and provided updates on their progress.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

NDSUS and ATCC worked together on the first part of this project, because both colleges had determined that their focus was to examine the DQP in relationship to the AAS degree and to gather employer input as a part of that analysis. Administrators from both campuses met numerous times to develop an action plan for the joint employer focus groups. This group developed a common list of employers to invite around five occupational clusters: health, business, manufacturing, construction, and transportation. Because the campuses are within seventy miles of each other, many of the same employers hire graduates from both institutions. The group developed questions and invited employers to attend a day-long session at NDSUS-Fargo. A document was developed that summarized the data, and it was shared with the participating employers as well as the respective campuses.

There were a number of successes associated with this project: collaboration with a similar institution; dialog with employers focused on expectations of entry-level employees and college preparation; faculty awareness of business/industry expectations; analysis of curriculum and

assessment methods compared to expectations outlined in the DQP; and alignment of curriculum, assessment methods, employer expectations, and DQP Areas of Learning.

Most Important Findings

While the wording of the outcomes is intentionally general in order to be more inclusive, some DQP outcomes were more descriptive of transfer language (Associate of Arts [AA] and Associate of Science [AS]) and some terminology was not at the appropriate level of competency for an AAS degree. In some cases, competency expectations would have been higher than the DQP language indicated. This made it more difficult for faculty members to determine alignment or gaps.

Including employers in the discussion concerning the knowledge, skills, and abilities that should be included in the AAS degree related to their occupation was a step in the right direction in creating a mutual relationship over degree qualifications. Employers expressed thanks that they were brought in to the up-front discussions rather than after decisions had been made.

Collaborating with another college reinforced the concept that colleges are more alike than different in serving the public good.

Comparison of associate's degree requirements within a curriculum compared to external practices provided verification of best practices.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY (*Fargo, North Dakota*)

Title of Project

Capstone and DQP Integration

Overview

North Dakota State University (NDSU) tested the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) by asking departments to compare student learning in their required capstone experiences with the DQP benchmarks for Applied Learning. Examining what “graduates can do with what they know” fits the land-grant culture

of NDSU. The work was organized and implemented by a group already charged with revising the general education curriculum. This committee was chosen because capstone experiences are presently a general education requirement and would most likely continue to be so after the revision.

Goals

- Engage faculty members in campus conversations about student learning and, specifically, about the

learning outcomes of the capstone experiences in their majors.

- Develop more reflective practitioners by having faculty members evaluate/review connections between capstone outcomes and proposed general education capstone outcomes.
- Use the campus-wide capstone evaluation process to promote incremental change by example.
- Develop faculty expertise in general education and in the assessment of student learning.
- Find ways to harmonize with existing learning outcomes from other accrediting bodies.

People Involved

More than 200 individuals were involved to some degree with this project. The Core Undergraduate Learning Experiences (CULE) task force undertook the bulk of the work. The staffs of NDSU's Group Decision Center and its Office of Registration and Records were essential to identifying capstone courses and deploying the electronic survey on the DQP. The 44 heads or chairs from programs and departments with capstones and the approximately 125 to 150 faculty who were involved in discussing and completing the original or the follow-up survey provided the bedrock of this project.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

CULE notes five specific outcomes of the DQP initiative, including any changes in processes, policies, technology, curricula, programs, and student learning and success that are now in place:

1. The DQP initiative allowed NDSU faculty and staff members to evaluate how their capstone courses fit into the goals and requirements in terms of NDSU general education, with a potential to change and improve those courses.
2. It caused NDSU faculty and staff members to reflect on the purpose and goals of their respective capstone

courses and reevaluate whether current efforts reflected best practices.

3. It stimulated conversations about student learning and caused faculty members to reflect on student outcomes in terms of capstone efforts.
4. It resulted in more complete university records of active capstone courses and the goals/activities of those efforts.
5. It encouraged faculty members to distill best practices in their capstones.

Most Important Findings

- The process of examining the capstone courses within a conceptual framework was useful to many departments as an exercise in reviewing courses and curriculum.
- When applied to professional programs, many administrators found the DQP too general to be very useful and thought that it fails to articulate with the requirements of their professional accrediting bodies.
- Administrators of majors and departments more traditionally associated with the liberal arts appeared to find the DQP framework most useful for assessing their capstone courses.
- Capstone courses, although part of the general education requirements of the university, are often highly discipline-specific in their content and outcomes, which probably contributed to the perceived lack of connection with the DQP for professional programs.
- Given the wide diversity of programs in a land-grant university, a limited test of the DQP using capstone courses made the process more manageable (and probably feasible) than a complete curriculum review.

Title of Project

Reimagining Program Review at Otterbein

Overview

The purpose of this project was to reimagine the program review process at Otterbein University as a university-wide initiative that incorporates all aspects of the campus community. The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) learning outcomes were examined to distill the value-added factor of an Otterbein education and articulate concrete ways in which every division of the university contributes to the development of an Otterbein graduate.

Goals

- Redesign and improve the process and culture of program review using the DQP.
- Develop each department's ability to understand, create, and oversee authentic assessment processes in the context of academic programs.
- Support a more consistent and deeper culture of evidence-based practice and continuous development in disciplinary, integrative, and co-curricular learning.

People Involved

The Accreditation Steering Committee had primary oversight of the project, and a number of other groups and committees were involved, including the Dean's Council, Institutional Effectiveness Committee, Budget Committee, Curriculum Committee, and so on. Nearly all full-time faculty members have had some level of involvement, as all departments have performed work to align their learning outcomes with Otterbein's University Learning Goals and update or change their outcomes as necessary to support the new program review process. All departments were asked to hold retreats focused on student learning outcomes assessment data during 2012–2013.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

Due to the nature of the goals themselves—which largely deal with a culture change at Otterbein—it cannot be said that any goal has been completed. The ultimate

objective would be to institute a culture of ongoing, evidence-based decision making about student learning, where all program-level outcomes are aligned with the university's goals for student learning. The primary goal of revising and reinstating academic program review has been accomplished:

- The academic program development process pilot is running successfully, and administrative program review will be based on a similar model.
- Academic program review is built into the governance structure in a way that will make it more sustainable and visible.

The culture of assessment has been strengthened to include learning outcomes assessment as a more consistent and ingrained process overall and within individual disciplines:

- All academic departments and programs are expected to submit either an annual or long-range program development report that includes documentation of assessment of student learning; most departments have held or will hold meetings to discuss assessment outcomes; and a conference was held for faculty members to participate in the discussion of assessment of the university's integrative, general education programs.
- There is a greater awareness of how the university's learning outcomes fit with the DQP and have a sense of what would need to be done to report learning outcomes at that level.
- A movement toward a shared language and shared practices across disciplines was enhanced by asking all departments to relate their learning outcomes to the DQP and to university outcomes and by a deliberate effort to use consistent resources and definitions with various groups involved in the processes of assessment and program development.

Most Important Findings

- The challenge of aligning both college-wide learning

outcomes and program-specific outcomes with the DQP provided an opportunity to better understand the university's own learning outcomes. Program-level outcomes were checked for consistency, level of specificity, and clarity of wording, using the DQP as a standard.

- In assessing student learning through outcomes specified by each of the university's majors and academic (as well as many co-curricular) programs, it was discovered that learning outcomes across campus are inconsistently worded and that some groups are clearer on how to assess these than others.
- Comparing the very specific, product-based language of the DQP helped many departments

imagine how to rearticulate their learning outcomes and/or to imagine assessment products that may fit their outcomes.

- There is a tendency in some national conversations to equate educational competencies with the accumulation of isolated bits of information and skills. The university's intentional, integrative curriculum is not easily replaced by a series of competency tests.
- There are those in higher education who proclaim that the strength of the system resides in its diversity. Indeed, each institution needs to retain the flexibility to determine learning outcomes that reflect its own distinctive mission and culture.

SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE (*Notre Dame, Indiana*)

Title of Project

Exploring the DQP through Comparative Analysis and Internal Reflection

Overview

Saint Mary's College developed two projects. The first project focused on a gap analysis between the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) and the college's new general education curriculum, the Sophia Program in Liberal Learning. The Sophia Program learning outcomes were grounded in the college's mission statement to emphasize the unique elements of a Saint Mary's education associated with the college's identity as a Catholic college for women in the Holy Cross tradition. The second project allowed self-selected departments on campus to focus on the Specialized Knowledge outcomes within the DQP by creating a gap analysis between the Specialized Knowledge outcomes and their departmental outcomes. In addition, a student survey was conducted to provide the departments with student self-assessment information and the DQP authors with student perspective regarding the language used in the DQP.

Goals

The goal of "testing" the DQP was twofold.

First, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) asked participating institutions to design projects that would allow them to provide feedback to the authors of the framework. In addition, the Saint Mary's project team hoped to use the opportunity to not only reflect on the DQP but to use it as a comparison point to consider any gaps in the college's own newly developed, learning outcomes-based general education curriculum, the Sophia Program in Liberal Learning.

People Involved

The work on "testing" the DQP began with the creation of a core project team, the members of which served as campus liaisons and coordinators of the work on the various subprojects. The project team included the provost and senior vice president for Academic Affairs, a professor of modern languages, an assistant professor of biology, and the director of Institutional Research and Assessment, and the assistant director of Institutional Research. All employees (faculty members, staff members, and administrators) were sent an e-mail inviting them to participate. Significant numbers of faculty members, staff members, and administrators were involved in one or more of the subprojects.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

This project has provided an early opportunity to further reflect on the Sophia Program and to engage in more in-depth discussions about student learning, both within the local and national context. It has also given the Saint Mary's College community the chance to focus on a significant initiative in higher education. These discussions have affirmed many of the strengths of the Sophia Program while highlighting potential modifications that might enhance the program. It is hoped that this will spur fruitful conversation on campus.

Most Important Findings

- The DQP framework served as a useful tool to foster

dialogue around student learning outcomes and provided a national point of reference to compare to the Sophia Program.

- There is considerable doubt about whether students arrive at a common understanding of the DQP and potentially other learning outcomes.
- The DQP outcomes were perceived to be overly prescriptive, unclear, and broad.
- The DQP contained implied curricular requirements that currently are not required of students on Saint Mary's campus.
- Institutional mission is not adequately infused throughout the DQP learning outcomes.

SAINT MARY-OF-THE-WOODS COLLEGE (*Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana*)

Title of Project

The DQP and SMWC General Studies: Preparing Tomorrow's Leaders Today

Overview

The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) was used as a guide to help create learning outcomes at the program and course level. These learning outcomes were proposed by the General Studies Committee and passed by the Faculty Assembly for the new curriculum that has been named The Woods Core. The General Studies program and its revision was a natural fit for testing the DQP for several reasons: it is the core of all undergraduate degrees at the college; the college was already in the midst of a revision to this curriculum and assessment of student learning; and this project would involve the largest number of individuals in the broadest manner across campus.

Goals

- Articulate learning outcomes of general education programs.
- Ensure general education relevance and alignment with assessment program.
- Create an understandable road map for students regarding learning outcomes.

- Foster deeper, sound, measurable student learning.

People Involved

The project was led by the vice president for Academic Affairs and the assistant academic dean, who undertook a wide range of activities designed to engage the sixty-five full-time faculty members with the DQP, including presentations to the General Studies Committee, four all-faculty retreats, and a workshop presentation by Lumina Foundation staff.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The project resulted in broad engagement with all full-time faculty members and additional academic staff members and administration. Participation in this initiative has also helped many Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College (SMWC) faculty members become more aware of the national landscape of higher education today. The DQP offered a starting point for conversation around assessment and learning outcomes that was anticipated with the general studies (GS) revision. In essence, the DQP has helped to shape many of the learning outcomes that will serve as a hallmark of The Woods Core. The Woods Core was launched in August 2013, and assessment results have not been collected or analyzed at

the time of this report. The first artifacts were collected from the new Woods Core courses beginning with the fall 2013 semester.

Most Important Findings

- The DQP helped to create some important conversations regarding learning outcomes, which had quite a significant impact on SMWC. The DQP was a tool for beginning a conversation that was needed to make the GS revision successful.
- The nineteen employers who were invited to participate in a discussion during one of the all-faculty retreats indicated that they value strong communication skills, critical thinking, creativity, certain dispositions, and professionalism. Faculty members recognized that they should engage employers more often.
- The DQP showed that faculty members were ready and willing to embrace a creative project that encourages curriculum analysis and reform; they identified that assessing student learning is important and that the current process was in need of reform.
- Faculty members like the idea of learning outcomes but are not totally in favor of having standardized language that all should use.
- Faculty members identified an additional thread that should be added to the project for SMWC: spiritual values. As part of the college's mission, imparting an emphasis on spirituality and values to the student is a desired outcome.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (*Chicago, Illinois*)

Title of Project

Initiative on the Degree Qualifications Profile

Overview

This project imagined the path of a student who must select a major, complete the core curriculum, and be exposed to myriad opportunities available in an urban research university setting with rich offerings in the arts, community service, political organizations, athletics, and hundreds of registered student organizations of all stripes. This combination composes the total college experience, which the project team examined as a whole. Members of the team then examined how well the DQP describes what The University of Chicago does.

The project team chose the majors in classics, history, and mathematics, drawing from three of The University of Chicago's five Collegiate Divisions, and used these programs to test those parts of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) that are focused on area-specific competencies. The University of Chicago's Collegiate Divisions are Humanities, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, and the New

Collegiate Division (for small, interdisciplinary programs). The university's four selected core sequences—astrophysics, classics of social and political thought, media aesthetics, and neurobiology—represent all but the New Collegiate Division.

Goals

- Show faculty members how their curricular piece fits with other elements of the curriculum.
- Look at how what The University of Chicago does and what its students do maps to the DQP.
- Tell the Lumina Foundation whether the DQP maps The University of Chicago's goals.

People Involved

The Provost's Office, in close collaboration with the College Dean's Office, led the DQP project. Two associate provosts with experience in accreditation and a longtime associate dean of the college worked with the directors of the undergraduate majors, the core directors, and faculty members and other academics in the selected

majors and cores, as well as the faculty associate deans as appropriate, to apply the concepts of the DQP. The most valuable contribution faculty members made was their time.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

For each major and each Core sequence, the project team read the DQP in parallel with accounts prepared by faculty members responsible for the major and the Core sequence. In each case project team members indicated where they think that what faculty members are doing corresponds to elements of bachelor's-level work as defined by the DQP. Where appropriate, notes are included about the ways in which the DQP failed to capture practices at The University of Chicago.

- **Media Aesthetics:** The sequence engages students in the development of humanistic literacy—teaching students through direct practice to observe and then to talk, think, and write rigorously about aesthetic objects and about the very idea of an aesthetic object. All of the Areas of Learning in the DQP are represented. Civic Learning is the least obvious, but not invisible, because engagement with contested public issues is hardly invisible to literature, music, and the arts. Mathematics is structured around repeated passes through the same issues, each time more rigorously, and the same might be said for humanistic learning. The structure of the media aesthetics courses; the way the quarterly themes illuminate one another; the way that “intertextuality” is experienced; the interplay and mutual reinforcement of reading, writing, and discussion; the progressive complexity of the writing assignments—all of these things are invisible to the DQP.
- **History Major:** Does the history major at Chicago undertake to do the range of things that the DQP identifies as Areas of Learning for the bachelor's degree? Yes—with the emphasis shifted toward intellectual skills and specialized knowledge and away from a direct engagement with civic learning. Does the history major at Chicago have a set of

orderly requirements, courses, assignments of increasing complexity, and advising and evaluation practices in place that make it seem likely that a student will actually practice and acquire the knowledge and the skills that the department claims to impart? Yes—within the constraints of a four-year curriculum that requires a major but that also asks more than a major of its students and asks more than undergraduate teaching of its faculty members. Thus the DQP and the history major are basically congruent.

- **Mathematics Major:** As with the history major, the DQP and the mathematics major are basically congruent. Students in the mathematics major become literate in the language of proof across the field. The major offers opportunities for advanced work in specialized areas of mathematics, independent and guided research, and teaching, and it requires that students engage in the application of mathematics in other disciplines.

Most Important Findings

Looking closely at the DQP in conjunction with The University of Chicago's Core sequences and majors raises several concerns. As a general template for existing programs, the DQP approximates some of what The University of Chicago is doing with students, but it does so only very generally. There is a crucial amount of substantive richness that the DQP simply does not capture. Consider only history, mathematics, and media aesthetics. Things that make these experiences vital as educational experiences for students are not visible in the DQP: for example, the progressive acquisition of mathematical literacy, the development of applicable skills in historical inquiry, the development of habits of observation of aesthetic objects and the movement from observation to argument in written work and discussion.

If it is just a general template for giving a rough measure of the adequacy of existing programs, perhaps this is not a problem. But the DQP could be used in an effort to create a curriculum, or worse, to dictate what ought to be added to an existing curriculum, and that would be problematic. A history major or a humanities

course for freshmen built up from the parts identified in the DQP would be a thin mixture indeed.

To put some of the same concerns somewhat differently: the emphasis on intellectual skills in the DQP is a good thing. Yet, from one angle the DQP reads

as washed out and too general, while from another it is in danger of being taken literally as a prescription for the content of syllabi that will substitute vague rubrics for substantive forms of inquiry grounded in actual intellectual practice.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-WHITEWATER (*Whitewater, Wisconsin*)

Title of Project

Learning by Degrees: A UW-Whitewater Empirical Test of the Degree Qualifications Profile

Overview

The Learning by Degrees plan invited participation from four academic departments (one from each academic college) that offered master's degree programs. These departments, selected in consultation with the academic deans, received resources (i.e., release time, stipends, service and supply) from the institution to support the following: (1) developing new or deploying existing assessments that were specific to Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) competencies (but also LEAP relevant); (2) coordinating student participation in the UW-Whitewater Assessment Center testing process; (3) preparing final reports that summarized project findings and evaluates the assumptions behind, and utility of, the DQP model; and (4) participating in all campus-wide meetings relevant to the project scheduled between November 2011 and June 2013.

Goals

- Delineate differences in expectations of student learning at UW-Whitewater (profiled by the DQP) between associate's-, bachelor's-, and master's-level students.
- More richly understand what distinguishes graduate-level from bachelor's-level learning at UW-Whitewater (as requested by the Higher Learning Commission in its 2006 visit).
- Identify differences between UW-Whitewater students who are associate's-degree qualified and

transfer students who come to UW-Whitewater after completing associate's degrees.

- Pilot test and evaluate the utility of the "Assessment Center" concept.

People Involved

Aside from the project director (the dean of the School of Graduate Studies) and the associate vice chancellor for Academic Affairs, each of the four academic departments involved in the project used teams of four to five faculty members and interviewed faculty and instructional staff within their departments (approximately fifty faculty and instructional staff members among all four departments). The four departments also collectively interviewed or surveyed approximately eighty students and involved approximately two hundred students (associate's, bachelor's, and master's) in curriculum-embedded assessments of Specialized Knowledge and Applied Learning competencies. The estimated fifty faculty members involved in the project (either as evaluators or interview subjects) represent about 15 percent of the total number of faculty and instructional staff members hired by the institution.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

Perhaps most directly significant at a campus level, all of the information from the work of the academic departments and the Assessment Center will be distilled for use by the Essential Learning and Assessment Review Committee (ELARC). The DQP data will be quite formative in discussions of ELARC in the 2013–2014 cycle. Beyond that, the project provided an explicit opportunity for the institution to test the Assessment Center concept (i.e., coordinated campus-

wide administration of standardized exams and campus-designed assessments). Much has been learned through this project related to the implementation, and it is safe to conclude that an Assessment Center approach to collecting institution-wide assessment data would require significant change or overhaul before further deployment.

At the departmental level, all four of the academic departments participating in the project indicated that this project has made them reevaluate their curriculum, the alignment of the curriculum, and the discipline-specific knowledge and applied skills they expect students to acquire. The process of engaging departments in the evaluation of the DQP model has had, and will likely continue to have, an impact on how these departments move forward in such areas of curricular alignment, assessment, course sequencing, and realigning learning outcomes with majors and submajors.

Most Important Findings

- In general, the research conducted by the departments and a statistical analysis of data from

Assessment Center work indicate that there were few differences in the abilities of associate's- and bachelor's-level students.

- The results of the work completed by the academic departments and the results from the Assessment Center indicate that there were statistically significant differences between the knowledge and skills of master's-level students and those of bachelor's- and associate's-level students.
- The project did initiate dialogues in departments about the differences between graduate and undergraduate experiences, but clearly delineated, resonant distinctions did not emerge in the departmental reports. A follow-up investigation is under way.
- The results of the Assessment Center portion of the project indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in student performance of bachelor's natives and bachelor's transfer students.

WESTMINSTER COLLEGE (*Fulton, Missouri*)

Title of Project

Teaching and Learning of Broad, Integrative Knowledge

Overview

Discussion had already taken place on Westminster College's campus about the desire to focus on how "broad, integrative knowledge" had been taught and learned on campus and how that might be improved, so the decision to focus on this Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) outcome was quite deliberate. It was also hoped that the DQP initiative would enrich the teaching and learning processes on the Westminster campus, specifically about broad, integrative knowledge, but also about the other learning goals in the DQP. Four specific projects were developed:

1. Survey of Teaching/Learning of Broad, Integrative Knowledge

2. Tier III and Westminster Seminar Coursework
3. Student Interaction with Board of Trustees Members and the Undergraduate Scholars Forum
4. Mapping the DQP to Westminster Courses and the Co-Curriculum

Goals

- Examine the degree to which skills detailed by the DQP are already being taught by faculty and staff members and learned by Westminster students.
- Develop and refine teaching and learning methods for better learning of "broad, integrative knowledge," particularly in Tier III courses.
- Map the DQP to existing Westminster programs, including majors, and with college learning goals and student development goals.

- Find ways to use both formative and summative assessments in productive ways in discussions with students about their learning.

People Involved

A wide range of individuals from the Westminster community was involved. The Reaccreditation Committee, composed of faculty members, staff members, and administrators, led the project. Students, faculty members, and staff members participated in the surveys; Tier III faculty members were involved in the exploration of “broad, integrative, knowledge” at the course level; students and members of the board of trustees participated in the Undergraduate Scholars Forum.

Key Accomplishments or Outcomes

The work with Tier III and Westminster Seminar faculty members largely helped in achieving the goal “to develop and refine teaching and learning methods for better learning of ‘broad, integrative knowledge.’” Faculty members reported that it was extremely useful to discuss their courses with other faculty members and to creatively

plan for activities that might promote “broad, integrative, knowledge.”

Most Important Findings

- “Broad, integrative knowledge” is clearly being taught and learned at all stages of the Westminster curriculum and co-curriculum.
- The project was perhaps most helpful in providing Westminster faculty members opportunities to develop and refine teaching and learning strategies and to use findings to refine programming.
- We realized that the development of “broad, integrative knowledge” requires both cognitive maturation and a particular commitment by teachers to articulate the broad, integrative nature of teaching and learning and to encourage reflection (metacognition) of how students are acquiring these skills.
- The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) rubric for integrated learning was quite useful for assessment purposes.

AUTHORS

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