

Delta College

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM 5 YEARS OF GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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DELTA COLLEGE

# OVERVIEW OF DELTA COLLEGE ASSESSMENT

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- Community college in the Mid-Michigan serving approximately 10,000 students annually from three different counties.
- Integrated general education model, embedded in all degrees, instead of the traditional distributed model.
- Two faculty led assessment committees:
  - SLAC – Program Assessment
  - GECAC – Gen Ed Assessment
    - Faculty Resource groups exist for each Gen Ed outcome.
- Assessment Office:
  - Dean of Teaching and Learning, SLAC Chair, GECAC Chair, and one amazing Administrative Office Professional!



# LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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1. Describe assessment best practices
2. Discuss common assessment problems
3. Brainstorm solutions to assessment problems

# ASSESSMENT BEST PRACTICES

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- A course or program should have 4-8 student learning outcomes
- Attempt to assess students near the end of the program
- Assess all outcomes in a 4-5 year cycle
- Assessment tool is valid and reliable
- Student work is evaluated against a standard
- Data collected is used to make changes to improve student learning = Closing the loop!
- Authentic and relevant
- Align the tool to the outcome

# GEN ED ASSESSMENT CHALLENGES

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- Data collected is used to make changes to improve student learning = Closing the loop!
- Confusion as to what the outcomes mean
- Different instructors/sections
- Critical thinking, e.g., looks different to different areas of the college
- Faculty buy-in
- College SLO vs. Institutional SLO
- Having faculty agree as to what is important
- Too many outcomes

# PROBLEMS AT DELTA COLLEGE

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1. Too many outcomes
2. Inconsistent scoring
3. Only collecting numerical data
4. Lack of faculty participation
5. COVID-19 global pandemic!!



# PROBLEM 1: TOO MANY OUTCOMES

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- From 2013-2015, only 5 of the 12 general education areas had conducted an assessment of at least one outcome.
- 38 total general education outcomes were too many to assess in a 3-5 year cycle.

- **Example:**

Reading 1: Successfully read a passage of text to gather information.
Reading 2: Successfully interpret the ways text (words and visual content) is organized and presented, specific to the disciplines.
Reading 3: Analyze written information in ways appropriate to the disciplines.
<b>Writing 1: Employ writing to communicate ideas appropriate to the discipline.</b>
<b>Writing 2: Employ conventional writing standards appropriate to the discipline.</b>
<b>Writing 3: Employ writing to document sources appropriate to the discipline.</b>
Communicating Effectively 1: Complete a formal presentation by gathering appropriate information, developing an effective structure, and using effective delivery techniques.
Communicating Effectively 2: Demonstrate productive interaction with others by effectively working on group tasks and exhibiting appropriate interpersonal skills.
<b>Critical Thinking 1: Interpret statements, texts, theories, problems, symbols, and observations effectively.</b>
<b>Critical Thinking 2: Question assumptions, points of view, data, evidence, formulations of problems, proposed answers, policies, theories, questions, and hypotheses.</b>
<b>Critical Thinking 3: Use relevant strategies to reach independent and defensible conclusions, theories, answers, and solutions.</b>

# HOW DID DELTA MOVE THE NEEDLE??

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- It started with data! (summer 2014)
  - Audits of Gen Ed for AA/AS graduates (how many met the outcomes)
  - Analysis of courses' Gen Ed audits (were expected courses meeting Gen Ed outcomes)
  - Analysis of number of courses meeting the outcomes (where were courses meeting outcomes)
  - Analysis of constructed programs of study earning degrees (identify ways through course choice that students could “avoid” outcomes)
- And followed with further data analyses and many, many, many, many discussions involving employees from across the college from 2015 into 2016



# SOME MORE DETAILS

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- References:

Faleski, M., & Handley-Miller, B. (2017, September). *General education at Delta College: Guided conversations toward relevant assessment*. (Assessment in Practice). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

- [https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/AiP\\_FaleskiHandley-Miller.pdf](https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/AiP_FaleskiHandley-Miller.pdf)

# SOLUTION I: NEW GEN ED OUTCOMES

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Gen Ed Outcome	Description of outcome
<b>Think Critically</b>	Produce a defensible conclusion or solution using critical or creative thinking.
<b>Communicate Effectively</b>	Communicate effectively in oral, written, or symbolic expression.
<b>Think Civically</b>	Demonstrate an understanding of diverse societies, ranging from local to global, in order to engage effectively in civic life.
<b>Cultivate Wellness</b>	Demonstrate an understanding of wellness principles to promote physical and personal health.
<b>Utilize Technology Effectively</b>	Solve a problem or accomplish a task using technology.
<b>Reason Quantitatively</b>	Use quantitative information or analyze data within context to arrive at meaningful results.

# PROBLEM 2: INCONSISTENT SCORING

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- Each resource group created their own rubric
- Each resource group set their own benchmark or standard which made it hard to determine strengths and weakness and compare data between learning outcomes
- Previous benchmarks included the following, 75% of the students will score at a level 3, 80% of the students will score at a level 3, 80% of the students will score at a level 2 or 3

# SOLUTION 2: COMMON RUBRIC AND STANDARD

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- A common rubric was created for scoring of student work by both the faculty and resource group members.
- A common benchmark of 70% of students scoring at a level 2 or 3 on the standard rubric was established for all outcomes.
- Resource group scores samples of student work in partnership with GECAC members.

<b>Level 0 - Dropped</b>	<b>Level 0 - No Evidence</b>	<b>Level 1 - Emerging</b>	<b>Level 2 - Developing</b>	<b>Level 3 - Mastery</b>
Student dropped before submission	No evidence	Does not meet expectations: has major errors, omissions, or inappropriate expressions	Meets minimal expectations: has minor errors, omissions, or inappropriate expressions	Shows proficiency in demonstrating the outcome

# PROBLEM 3: ONLY COLLECTING NUMERICAL DATA

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- When students scored low on an assessment it was hard to know why the students were struggling or determine where improvements to teaching need to be made.

Year	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
Outcome	Think Civically	Cultivate Wellness	Utilize Technology	Reason Quantitatively	Communicate Effectively	Think Critically
2 or 3	181	217	309	711	504	827
Total N	217	246	398	941	580	1014
% met	83%	88%	78%	76%	87%	82%

# SOLUTION 3: ASK FOR QUALITATIVE COMMENTS

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- Ask for qualitative comments in addition to the numerical scores.
- Look for trends and areas of weakness.
- Select assignments that are a good assessment tool to share with others
- Ask faculty what they are changing as a result of assessment data!

# PROBLEM 4: LACK OF FACULTY PARTICIPATION

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- Low return rates were common in our first assessment cycle. Average rate of return = 62%

Year	2017	2017	2018	2018	2019	2019
Outcome	Think Civically	Cultivate Wellness	Utilize Technology	Reason Quantitatively	Communicate Effectively	Think Critically
Returned scores	217	246	398	941	580	1014
Whole Sample	425	509	640	1139	1028	1430
% returned	51%	48%	62%	83%	56%	71%

# SOLUTION 4: USE COURSE EMBEDDED ASSESSMENTS

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- Encourage the use of course embedded assessments
- Assessment should be meaningful and relevant to the course
- Faculty score student work first and only submit select samples to the Assessment Office
- Faculty leaders oversee resources groups for each outcome = lots of faculty involvement
- Faculty from all divisions serve on the General Education Curriculum and Assessment Committee (GECAC)



# PROBLEM 5: GLOBAL PANDEMIC

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- The global COVID pandemic caused campus to close.
- We were forced to work remotely for the remainder of the Winter 2020 semester and 2020-2021 academic year.
- Nonetheless, assessment must go on!



# SOLUTION 5: BE CREATIVE

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- Host virtual meetings via Zoom.
- Ask faculty to email samples of student work to the Assessment Office.
- Upload samples of student work to be viewed online by faculty.
- Divide up into different break out rooms to discuss and score samples.
- Keep doing assessment!
  - Data on more students is now being collected and we have increased rates of return. The Cultivate Wellness Outcome rate of return went from 48% in 2017 to 91% in 2020!



# DON'T FORGET TO CLOSE THE LOOP!

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- Assessment data should be used to improve student learning
- Changes made a result of assessment data include:
  - Updated outcomes
  - Updated course content
  - Changes to a class assignment or activity
  - Changes in materials provided
  - Adjustments to the rubric

# THANK YOU!

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- References:

Allen, M. J. (2004). *Assessing academic programs in higher education*. Anker Publishing.

Allen, M. J. (2006). *Assessing general education programs*. Anker Publishing.

Faleski, M., & Handley-Miller, B. (2017, September). *General education at Delta College: Guided conversations toward relevant assessment*. (Assessment in Practice). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois and Indiana University, National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA).

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