

Southwest Minnesota State University, MN

SMSU's Assessment Project

Participation Start: 10-14-2015

Participation End: 10-31-2019

Date Completed: 03-25-2020

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Team Lead: Jeffrey Bell

Team Member(s): Pam Gladis
Aimee Shouse
Alan Matzner
Scott Crowell
Ben Anderson

This Results Report reflects the activity of Southwest Minnesota State University in the Assessment Academy Collaboration Network. It is not an official document of the Higher Learning Commission.

Context

Q: Please introduce your institution to other Academy Teams. Provide contextual information on your institution including but not limited to institutional type, size and student populations served. (100 – 200 words).

A: Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) is a unionized, public, regional, comprehensive institution that is part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Courses at SMSU are taught in a liberal arts tradition. SMSU offers 50 different majors, 5 associate's degrees and 4 master's degrees.

The student population served varies, but in 2014, 6,896 students were enrolled. Of that number about 400 were graduate students, and 4,000 were enrolled in SMSU's concurrent enrollment program entitled College Now.

SMSU is known for having quality and affordable programs. For instance, SMSU was one of 12 institutions in Minnesota to earn the "20-30 Club" designation by The College Database, which recognized SMSU for having an annual tuition rate below \$20,000 and new graduates who earn more than \$30,000 annually.

Further 99% of SMSU students are employed or admitted to funded graduate work shortly after graduation. Moreover, SMSU was honored as a top college for teacher education in the Online College Database's ranking.

Q: Summarize what have your institution has done in the past related to the assessment of student learning and what are current assessment initiatives? (100 – 200 words).

A: SMSU faculty are deeply committed to teaching and student learning and have been engaged in assessment activities- albeit in a limited way- for many years. Over the past ten years, SMSU has been experiencing what can only be described as a culture shift regarding assessment. This shift in institutional mindset has largely been due to four major events:

- 1) the formation and implementation of a new Liberal Education Program (LEP);
- 2) a renewed emphasis on academic program self-studies (also called reviews);
- 3) the revitalization of the Committee for Institutional Assessment (CIA);
- 4) a first-time effort by Student Affairs to incorporate student learning outcomes, particularly the LEP outcomes, where appropriate in co-curricular areas.

Specific evidence pertaining to these broad areas can be found at SMSU's Committee for Institutional Assessment web site: <http://www.smsu.edu/administration/committees/cia/>

Q: Now that your team has a better idea of the structure and purpose of the Academy, what are your institution's primary needs for participation in the Academy? (100 – 200 words).

A: In our original application, we identified three needs that our HLC report noted our campus had in the area of assessment. We have now decided to focus on addressing only the following need: Develop a plan that clearly articulates how the CIA, Liberal Education Committee, and assessment coordinator will work collaboratively to create and implement a genuine and intentional Assessment Plan for the Liberal Education Student Learning Outcomes the results of which can be reliably used to enhance teaching and learning.

Q: What potential barriers does your team see to progress? (100 – 200 words).

A: Given that SMSU has received an HLC visit report listing several assessment issues, it will

be hard for the assessment team to stay focused on one project. Further, faculty buy-in with respect to assessment could be an issue. As such, working in a timely and efficient manner will likely be a challenge. Budget considerations may also become an issue during the team's project.

Impact Report

Q:

What do you see as the next logical steps for continuing the work that you have begun in the Academy?

A: At the time of the Results Forum, there seemed to be some momentum to move our Liberal Education Program (LEP) assessment from the 10 Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) learning goals to focusing on SMSU's Core Skills (Written Communication, Oral Communication, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy). The Assessment Academy Team brought our work from the forum and presented it to the Committee on Institutional Assessment (CIA) and the Liberal Education Committee (LEC). The LEC referred this topic to the faculty association Executive Committee and subsequently it was presented to the faculty assembly. There was not full agreement on focusing our efforts on the Core Skills and the issue was sent back to the CIA for further discussion. Interestingly, including students in assessment was also on the agenda at the next CIA meeting. This led to a robust discussion about using portfolios for assessment of student learning in the MnTC and of longitudinal assessment of growth in the Core Skills.

February's Assessment Day will take up portfolio assessment as its primary focus this year. Faculty, student services, students, and administration will all engage in introductions, demonstrations, and discussions about portfolios for assessing the LEP and Core Skills.

If there is momentum for moving forward with this plan, then 2020-2021 will be used to develop the procedures and processes as well as work through concerns. If there is not momentum for this, then our original plan of sampling artifacts from each of the MnTC courses will be enacted and procedures such as outcome rotations by year, determining if small committees or each course instructor will perform the assessment, etc. Then, 2021-2022 the new plan will be fully enacted and added to our Campus Assessment Master Plan. If sampling is used, we will still need to determine how we will involve students in the process. This may be done by a student self-evaluation of the same artifact or test item/battery used.

Another step we will take is to move our Assessment Day to the month of April. We can enhance our programmatic assessment this way for programs that use portfolio submissions (e.g. Professional Writing, Art, Agricultural Solutions), Major Skills Tests or similar tests (e.g. Math, Psychology), and student perception surveys or focus groups.

Q:

What steps will you take to keep faculty and staff engaged in ongoing assessment of student learning?

A: SMSU will continue using the incentives, supports, and events that have developed faculty engagement during the four years of this project. This includes assessment mini-grants, the use of Liaison Teams and Program Assessment Leaders, and Assessment Day with Poster Reception. In addition, assessment topics have become regular sessions at our Professional

Development Day each semester. Regarding mini-grants, these have been expanded to include interdisciplinary faculty learning community support if the group of faculty have assessment as an ongoing topic in their work; none have been created as of this submission. Some of the frequencies for these events will change. For example, programs will now submit their assessment reports every other year so the work of the Liaison Team members will be more rigorous on a semi-annual basis. Assessment Day will only have an Assessment Poster fair and reception every other year.

Depending on how the final LEP assessment plan develops, we may need to determine how to appropriately compensate faculty members for the additional assessment work. This will require shared governance to determine how to accomplish this in a manner that keeps faculty engaged.

Response to Impact Report

Q:

Please describe your general impression of the institution's progress in the Academy. Include recognition of significant accomplishments, progress, and/or practices.

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

The SMSU team followed a consistent practice of investing significant institutional energy, communications, and actions to focus the Assessment Academy project on a trajectory of success. The project has been substantially accomplished, and I'd say the best sign of its success, beyond specific vehicles, is the Impact Report's clear sign of momentum and institutionalization. SMSU has improved her culture of student learning through improving general education and program assessment. It developed curriculum maps and tied them to assessment instruments. It began the work of aligning the local general education curriculum to the new state/system general education learning goals. The team also developed and improved a series of faculty-led efforts to monitor and impact assessment. Along the way, Assessment Day and Professional Development days provided opportunities to discuss planning, tweak efforts, celebrate successes, and keep SMSU assessment personnel and the entire institution "in the circle". SMSU leadership and faculty have collaborated to invest human capital and physical resources for improving student learning. I hope many other institutions will benefit from reading about this institution's work.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Bernie does a good job of outlining major accomplishments and I fully agree with his observations. This has been a model academy project, with attention to all major aspects of assessment. In reading your Impact Report as well as reviewing your past postings, it is clear SMSU is at a very different place than when you started the Academy. The increase from 3% to 71% of academic programs using data to improve student learning is beyond impressive. Very well done.

Q:

Do you have any particular concerns about the work they have done?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

No, I do not. I would say the main challenge for any culture is to perpetuate itself and continue improving. The SMSU project and approach to general education and program assessment is systematic and systemic. It will be important for faculty and administration to continue investing the time and resources to maintain and further refine SMSU assessment practices and processes. In that regard, it's heartening to read that consideration of additional support for invested faculty is under consideration.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Again, I fully concur with Bernie and have no concerns.

Q:

In your judgment, is the institution prepared to sustain its assessment efforts after it leaves the Academy? Do you have any specific recommendations to help it sustain its efforts?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

Yes, most definitely. As the Impact Report notes, the institution has reiterated her cycle of actions this year. SMSU thoughtfully and carefully is considering the best modality to pursue general education/liberal education alignment with the system learning goals either through a portfolio method or artifacts sampling. Successful engagement strategies for assessment stakeholders (mini-grants, Assessment Day, liaison teams, PALs (program assessment leaders) and poster sessions) continue. This is clear evidence of sustaining the project's vehicles, and even more, of SMSU's dedication to student learning. My main suggestion would be to continue and enliven the engagement events and processes and to use them as a basis for making decisions for furthering SMSU's assessment culture.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Absolutely SMSU is prepared to sustain its assessment efforts. Again, I fully concur with Bernie. SMSU not only has the knowledge and skills to be successful, but has put into place an effective infrastructure to promote and sustain assessment efforts, and the Academy project really has had an impact on the very culture of the institution. I don't really have any specific recommendations as you are already very much on target with everything you are doing. The only reminder I would give is to make sure you assess impact of changes made on the basis of assessment data.

Q:

Please note any other observations or recommendations that you wish to share.

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

I would like to thank former Provost Watson, Jeff Bell, and the entire SMSU Academy team for their hard work, and for what they have shared with me as a primary mentor. I have learned too from our interactions, and I wish the students, faculty, staff, and administration of Southwest Minnesota State University much success moving forward!

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I too would like to thank this team as it has been an absolute pleasure to work with you. Jeff's leadership and the commitment of the team has had a significant impact on the institution and you have accomplished a great deal during your time in the Academy. I am so proud of this team and wish you all the best as you continue to use assessment to make an impact on the educational experiences of your students. Congratulations.

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 8.0 - Project

Q:

What have been your accomplishments while in the Academy? Consider the range of these accomplishments, from the very specific (e.g., development of a rubric) to the more general (e.g. outcomes-based curriculum approval processes).

A: Prior to joining the Assessment Academy, we only had programmatic assessment plans being developed for program student learning outcomes. There were only a handful of academic programs that were collecting and using assessment data. In the original Plan for the Assessment of Student Learning (PASL) programs established student learning outcomes and a matrix of courses where those outcomes were being taught in the curriculum/planned to be assessed. The original goal of our project was to develop useful and rich assessment for our Liberal Education Program (LEP) student learning outcomes. Since joining the Assessment Academy, we have made great progress in our assessment processes for our LEP and academic programs:

A) We have aligned program learning outcomes with our general education outcomes.

B) We have included assessment of our LEP student learning outcomes in our student services unit annual reports.

C) We have developed standardized reporting forms for our Report on the Assessment of Student Learning (RASL).

D) We created a Campus Assessment Master Plan (CAMP).

E) All academic programs have active PASLs and are collecting data.

F) Most academic programs are using these data to make curricular and instructional decisions (71.2% in 2018-2019 compared to 3.0% in 2016-2017).

More generally, our campus has accepted that assessment is part of what we do and that to most faculty, assessment has value for evaluating and working to improve student learning.

Q:

Looking back, reflect on the evolution of your Academy project. What factors does your team feel most influenced how the project developed and changed?

A: One of the largest sources of impact on our project was our mentor and scholar involvement. Both have presented at our All-University Assessment Day. Each made rich

recommendations and were always very encouraging about our progress and growth.

We distributed the assessment work broadly across campus and this led to much greater communication about assessment. Meetings and Professional Development on assessment became regular instead of sporadic.

Assessment Academy involvement led us to combining the HLC and Strategic Planning Committees into one all-university committee. It also led to energizing the Committee on Institutional Assessment and the Liberal Education Committee to coordinate assessment efforts.

Combining our Assessment Coordinator position with the HLC Coordinator improved coordination of efforts related to assessment. This project has persuaded the campus leadership to extend this appointment as a longer-term position instead of an intermittent position.

Q:

How has institutional capacity for assessing student learning changed over your time in the Academy?

A: Our assessment report data indicates tremendous growth in the use of assessment data for working towards improving student learning. All academic programs have acknowledged the need to perform assessment and are at a minimum beginning to collect assessment data during the last 12 months. The campus has developed several structures to help aid and evaluate assessment. The CIA has small liaison teams assigned to several programs to serve as assessment advisors. Each Liaison Team has a member from the LEC if any of their programs offer courses in the LEP. Each academic program has Program Assessment Leaders that the Liaison Team coordinates with. In all, almost 40 members of campus help to coordinate assessment efforts in one manner or another.

Q:

What evidence do you have that your Academy work is improving student learning?

A: We have three years of programmatic assessment RASLs and we need to fully mine those reports to determine this.

Q:

What work still needs to be done?

A: In addition to mining the RASLs for evidence, there are several key areas we need to fully develop. The most pressing of these is to finish our plan for assessment of the LEP now that the LEP has been revised. In particular, this plan will need to be able to generate campus-wide baseline data that can demonstrate learning of the LEP learning outcomes and provide programs benchmarks to compare their students to for identifying growth. Now that many programs are beginning new assessment cycles, we will need to help programs develop plans to measure learning growth that may have occurred from their curricular and instructional changes made based upon their data. We are also beginning to have programs perform a self-evaluation of their own assessment reporting and this will need refinement. Another effort we are currently developing is changing our annual Assessment Day to

include student involvement; this may be through completing learning assessment (e.g. Major Field Tests, Portfolio Presentations) and possibly through the conducting of student focus groups about student perceptions of their own learning as an indirect method of developing greater context. Finally, more intentionally discussions about student learning assessment needs to occur across campus and in conjunction with strategic planning efforts, curriculum review, program review, and accreditation.

Version 8.0 - Update

Q:

Please confirm that Part I of the Impact Report is ready for submission.

A: This project is ready for review.

Version 8.0 - Response

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A:

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

A:

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A:

Q:

What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A:

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 7.0 - Project

Q:

Consider the current tags associated with your project, are they still accurate? If not, modify your tags.

A: Yes, the current project tags are correct.

Version 7.0 - Update

Q:

Have you achieved the goals outlined in recent posts? Why or why not?

A: 1. Most duties have been transferred over to the CIA. Most of the CIA's work plan for the year were transition items. The creation of a work plan was a helpful model in this endeavor. AAT has continued to revise the CAMP and deconstructing the RASL as a tool to gather information from programs and use the RASLs to inform programs on progress. The process has now been institutionalized and now needs refining. Fall professional development day is now a combined assessment/professional development day. We need to continue to develop processes that will allow aggregated data at the campus level that will assist programs with comparison benchmarks for student learning outcomes. In addition, we are creating professional development opportunities for the CIA members in place of changing the committee charge. The RASL template revisions are on-going.

Q:

How did you incorporate the feedback from the Mentor Consultation and previous postings?

A: We have worked diligently towards consistent messaging around our assessment processes as codified in the CAMP. We have begun, as a campus, to fully embrace our distributed model of assessment. This feedback also helped to shape the focused visit within our Fall HLC Comprehensive Evaluation and was integral in its successful outcome as well as the successful outcome. The consultation helped us to finalize this messaging and gave us momentum and confidence as we went into the comprehensive evaluation and focused visit. We have invited our mentor to be part of this spring's assessment day in part to validate the assessment work on our campus and also to share with our campus our success.

Q:

What tasks do you plan to accomplish in the next six months?

A: We hope to finalize handing over the assessment roles of the Academy Team to other

campus constituents in an effort to institutionalize the work of the academy project. We still need to synergize the work of the CIA with the Liberal Education Committee, which is planned for late spring as a two day retreat just after commencement. We also need to assist with the professional development of the CIA members related to assessment.

Q:

What additional guidance is needed to see your project through to the end of the program?

A: We think that the "fly-wheel" of assessment is running continuously on our campus. We have received much feedback along the way through the Academy participation. by bringing our mentor and scholar to campus in subsequent years has assisted with embedding processes into the campus fabric. The phone calls and discussions with the mentor and scholar have been very useful. At this time, we need to visualize the finish line of the project and receive encouragement to cross it. This is not to say, however, that there will not be additional growth needed and guidance to help our campus reach a mature stage in many aspects of the culture of assessment will take campus-wide discussions and time.

Q:

Now, in your final year, your team should begin to think about how your institution will continue to support and sustain improvement efforts without the structure of the Academy. What are some of your initial thoughts that your team has for continuing your momentum post-Academy?

(Note: Formal sustainability planning will be facilitated at the Results Forum).

A: This has been a goal of the project for the last academic year and the work of the team has been to institutionalize the processes through the CAMP and PALs. We have made changes to when assessment reports were due to help ease the workload of academic programs late in the academic year and this served as a good-will gesture.

Version 7.0 - Response

Q:

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Primary Mentor:

Bernard Rowan

(773) 995-2439

trowanii@csu.edu

HLC Scholar:

Jan Smith

jsmith@pittstate.edu

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

The SMSU team has begun to consolidate its project and to institutionalize the work of the last six years. As noted in this update, the team is implementing a work plan that involves ongoing review of the Campus Assessment Master Plan (CAMP), review of Report on Assessment of Student Learning (RASL) templates, use of professional development days for attention to assessment processes, continuous and consistent messaging, and ongoing efforts to coordinate the work of the CIA (Committee on Institutional Assessment) and the Liberal Education Committee (LEC), the latter with regard to the updated system-wide general education learning outcomes and alignment at SMSU. Identifying professional development opportunities for CIA members is also in process.

These are strengths because they show the Team has achieved wide success in implementing the distributed model of assessment, involving diverse and campus-wide constituencies, and in implementing the CAMP. The university's assessment personnel are succeeding to engage the hard work of developing further and improving the SMSU assessment culture. Program Assessment Leaders (PALs) continue to articulate and align project vehicles with the master plan. These developments also document strengths of the project at this phase. There is the recognition that further professional development for assessment stakeholders is a way of cycling the project-based approach of this project and further enhancing student learning at SMSU.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Wow. Again, I really continue to be impressed with your efforts to make assessment a part of the fabric of your institution, both in terms of the engagement of campus and the transfer of leadership from your temporary Academy team to more permanent structures. You are doing a great job of setting the stage for long-term sustainability.

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

I do not find anything about which I am unclear or have additional questions from this update.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I also have no major questions. I don't have a good sense of some of the details of your next steps (e.g. nature of training, specific responsibilities of roles you are handing over). But I'm not sure I need more detail as my sense is you have a great handle on where you are headed and are not in need of specific feedback at this time.

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

The update indicates a number of important tasks intended for the final phase of this Project. Institutionalizing the Team roles to campus stakeholders, identifying a cohort of PALs and others who will receive further professional development opportunities, and focusing effort on the realignment of SMSU general education outcomes with the updated system outcomes are the critical things for this project's culmination. I'd also add keeping an interested communication lane open for those PALs whose RASLs show need of further alignment with the CAMP and its elements.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

What evidence do you have that assessment is having an impact on student learning? You have done a great job establishing infrastructure and are now at the point where your hard work will be paying off. I would also point out you are at a critical point in your project, given your recent successful HLC visit. Based on experience, I have seen many institutions stall out at this point. I don't currently see any evidence of this happening on your campus, as I'm not hearing a compliance mindset. But I encourage you to take every opportunity to reinforce that what you are doing is about your students and their learning rather than satisfying an external agency. Overall, I think you have a good sense of where you need to head in the next few months.

Q:

What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor)

I do not have additional resources or possibilities to mention at this time.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I think your biggest resource right now is your team. It is clear from your postings, this is an active and engaged group.

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 6.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects

A: We are following Rochester Community and Technical College. They had similar concerns as ours when they started the Assessment Academy. They have completed the academy and have created more embedded assessment processes at the program level. They have also listed a set of indicators that they will be tracking which is similar to SMSU's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Their list is more extensive than our campus metrics (KPIs) and we would like to investigate how to use these as campus-level assessment on top of our work to aggregate program-level and Liberal Education Program-level data.

We are also following Buena Vista University. Although they have far fewer main outcomes (3 versus SMSU's 7) they have engaged students in their processes. Since we are moving into the final phase of our project, one of our goals is to better engage the student constituency. We have learned from BVU that the student body can plan events about the learning outcomes. Even though their outcome number is smaller, and therefore, theoretically more manageable, BVU has noted in their project that they have had data collection struggles. Their campus is moving towards a portfolio submission system for artifacts and this is a discussion item that SMSU has recently begun grappling with.

Version 6.0 - Update

Q:

What were the most significant results from the Third Year Consultation?

A: SMSU had 4 groups participate in the 3rd Year Consultation. This included the Assessment Academy Team, the Committee on Institutional Assessment (CIA), the Liberal Education Committee (LEC), and the Program Assessment Leaders (PALs). It became quite clear as each of these groups interacted with Dr. Rowan that SMSU has developed a distributed work model for assessment that is more a coalition of the committed than we have ever had as a campus. There was consistency in the discussion across the groups and it also became clear that the campus is using the same language and nomenclature when talking about assessment. The Assessment Academy Team at SMSU views this as a measure of success. We also think that Dr. Rowan was able to see more clearly how our labor contract(s) play a role in how faculty view assessment.

Q:

Looking back at the tasks that you had outlined for your project following the Midpoint Roundtable, what progress has been made and what tasks remain? What is your plan to address the remaining tasks in the next six months?

A: In the last year, SMSU accomplished its major tasks developed at the Midpoint Roundtable. SMSU has developed a Campus Assessment Master Plan (CAMP). In the CAMP, we established new reporting timelines and aligned our procedures and assessment reports so that they could be more easily used by a variety of campus constituencies including, but not limited to, the CIA, LEC, Strategic Planning, Academic Programs during their Program Review, etc. We have identified Program Assessment Leaders (PALs) and integrated them into our Assessment Liaison Team structure.

A key task in the next six months is to transfer some assessment responsibilities over to the CIA but to make sure that programs are continuing their process on the assessment cycle and data is being collected, analyzed, and used to inform instruction, pedagogy, curriculum, and program development. The Assessment Academy Team will need to help programs, the CIA, and LEC make sense of the new assessment reports (RASL) that is part of the CAMP. Therefore, in the next six months, the team will need to view the RASL reports from the programs. This will help the team determine whether the RASLs are giving SMSU the data it needs for ensuring assessment leads to continuous improvement in learning for our students. Depending on the quality of the data in the RASLs submitted September 17, 2018, the team may need to work with Administration and the Calendar Committee to add a fall semester Assessment Day in addition to our spring semester day. The fall semester would focus more on performing assessment of our Liberal Education Program student learning outcomes and training faculty to use the eight campus-adopted rubrics in this process.

Q:

How is the Academy project contributing to creating a culture of learning? How is the team engaging institutional stakeholders in the Academy work?

A: We have assessment sessions during Professional Development Day. We have our annual Assessment Day. Liaisons meet with programs to review PASLs and assessment cycle progress and provide status reports. We have created the PALs to assist their programs in managing the assessment process. We have engaged non-AAT faculty to make presentations at the assembly meetings. With Jeff Bell being identified as the assessment person for the campus we have had consistent messaging out of the faculty to the campus; this messaging is that assessment is important, useful, and at its core about teaching and student learning. The team has almost worked in the background to develop sustainable processes working through other faculty/staff groups. The remaining stakeholders the team and campus needs to find a way to engage are students.

Q:

What are your plans and goals for the next six months? What challenges do you anticipate?

A: A major goal of the Assessment Academy Team in the next six months is to determine if the RASL data can be aggregated meaningfully at the campus level. The team also plans to begin handing over duties developed during the project to the appropriate committees where they eventually will be maintained. Whether there is resistance to rolling over these duties is not known. To do this, we may have to consider changing the structure of some of our

committees and fine-tuning their committee charges. Specifically, the CIA may need to be revised to be a more limited campus committee instead of its All-University Committee status and its charge may need to be rewritten to expressly state that its main role is to work with assessment data since it is currently viewed more as an assessment advisory group. Furthermore, we will have to work as a campus to delineate the specific assessment roles of the CIA and LEC since both have somewhat amorphous and overlapping assessment charges related to the LEP student learning outcomes.

We anticipate having challenges surrounding developing a university-wide report from our assessment data. We are unsure whether we will get the robust data we need in this round of submissions. We may need to use the Liaison Team to work with some “RASL Remediation” meetings. The RASL template may need edits or complete re-design because of technical limitations for different template platforms (e.g. Excel, etc.).

Version 6.0 - Response

Q:

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Primary Mentor:

Bernard Rowan, trowanii@csu.edu, (773) 995-2439

HLC Scholar:

Jan Smith

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

The Third Year Consultation sessions provided a wonderful opportunity for the SMSU team and numerous institutional stakeholders to take stock of their progress to date and to chart directions for their last year in the Academy, as well as to anticipate their participation in the Results Forum. The strengths of the Consultation were the depth and breadth of participation by the four teams (Academy Team, CIA, LEC, and program assessment coordinators), their understanding of SMSU's progress to date in developing and implementing project vehicles, and their sense of next steps. The project also derives strength from the ongoing development of SMSU's assessment culture through the varied collaborations, use of Assessment Days and professional development sessions, and the commitment of institutional leaders to drive the process and to bring others into it as colleagues.

SMSU continues to develop the values that student learning is everyone's responsibility. It was apparent that much work has occurred and continues to align assessment and repeatable processes to generate reliable institutional data. In time, this should enable the institution to show improved student learning as well as improved compliance with assessment processes.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I concur with Bernie's observations and as I read back through your postings, it is clear you have accomplished a great deal to date. I especially want to highlight your distributed work model as a strength as this sets you up well for long-term sustainability. Well done.

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

I don't find anything to be unclear. I'd simply note that this update echoes what a number of participants shared. The submission of the next round of department/program reports and data is a key milestone. It will enable SMSU stakeholders to identify the development of cohesiveness around the project's enhanced processes for general education and program assessment.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Thank you for another helpful posting. I don't have any major questions this time around. But you have outlined several key accomplishments for the next six months, so will definitely be interested in hearing what worked well and where were your challenges.

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

In addition to closely analyzing the next round of reports, the Consultations brought out several other key things to which the institution should pay attention: first, the faculty have adopted the new general education curriculum, the MN Transfer curriculum, with next Fall (2019) as the date for full implementation. This will highlight the importance of migrating general education assessment to these outcomes. While the institution reported substantial alignment, it will still be a time of transition. Second, the assessment coordinators and Jeff Bell noted the "duelling capstones". There is at present a liberal education capstone and a program capstone. SMSU is mulling whether to continue the former. Third, I think the CIA would do well to continue its good practice of meeting with or checking in with each program over time to make sure the synergy present now continues.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I think you are at a critical point in your Academy participation, shifting from a finite Academy project to an ongoing process of assessment, especially with some of the transfer of responsibilities. How are you providing support to make this transfer as seamless as possible. The other obvious critical piece for the next six months is to review reports to determine if the data you are getting is what you need. Don't be afraid to make adjustments, but do so in a way that minimizes frustration with changes so that you don't lose

momentum. One approach is to engage stakeholders in this discussion so they take ownership and don't feel their efforts are being judged as inadequate by others.

Q:

What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

I do not have any other possibilities or resources to suggest at this time.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I'm with Bernie and think you already have the knowledge and skills you need for this part of your Academy project. The Collaboration Network continues to be a good resource to learn more specifics about how other institutions have approached where you are at in your work.

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 5.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: We have not begun to follow any new projects since our last update. We did, however, greatly appreciate the collaborative inter-team networking at the Midpoint Roundtable.

Version 5.0 - Update

Q:

Identify and explain any specific changes to your project scope and design since the last Project Update.

A:

In our Project V. 4.0, we intended to complete a “gap analysis” to determine where our Liberal Education student learning outcomes (SLOs) were being assessed by programs. Specifically, we wanted to determine what percentage of programs were assessing the 7 outcomes at the 100, 200, 300, and 400 level of coursework. This gap analysis was to be performed using the programmatic assessment reports contained as a sub-component of Departmental Annual Reports. Our work at the Midpoint Roundtable revealed that we could not glean this information from the departmental reports and that we would have to create a new plan to gather that information. In the short term, we will send out a survey to each program as a one-time “fix” for this discovery that we did not obtain the data we expected would be revealed by the Department Annual Reports. This one-time survey seeks to ascertain the following information: 1) What course numbers are you assessing student learning of each of the Liberal Education SLOs? 2) What artifacts from these courses are you assessing? 3) Which rubrics or tools are you using to perform this assessment? This should provide us with the information we need to move forward in the interim. In the long term, we need to finalize our Assessment Plan and institutionalize the related processes for performing assessment. Also, we will need to provide training to programs on these updated processes and obtain revised versions of prior assessment documents upon implementation of the campus-wide assessment plan. One possible manner of efficiently training faculty members on these new processes will be to have them complete a training module using our course management system (Desire to Learn Brightspace). This training can include a short quiz so that we can insure programs are clear about our assessment processes.

Q:

Describe your short term plan for measuring student learning. What specific tasks do you plan to accomplish in the next six months?

A: In the next 6 months, we will send out the aforementioned survey and complete our Assessment Plan. One of the revisions to our processes that will aid these efforts is that we are de-coupling the submission of programmatic Assessment Reports from the Department Annual Report process. We have developed an executive summary template for these reports that will help to situate the assessment data in a manner that our Liberal Education Committee (LEC) and our Committee on Institutional Assessment (CIA) will be able to utilize. In the next 6 months, we need to vet this template through those two committees and implement its use in the next Assessment Reports. These reports will now be due in mid to late September instead of in the summer. We will need to finalize the instructions within the Assessment Plan so that programs can provide our Assessment Academy Team and the two assessment-related committees above with useful assessment data.

Q:

How well are you positioned to complete the project in the final two years of the Academy? What additional tools, resources, and engagement do you need?

A: We are confident that we will have summary data on how fully we are assessing the Liberal Education SLOs within programs. We are hopeful that we can ascertain our student learning related to these outcomes and programmatic improvements related to those outcomes. The greatest need we have is for our Liberal Education Committee and our Committee on Institutional Assessment to become more autonomous in their work to oversee assessment. These committees will need to move from more “advisory” roles into work groups that perform aggregation and reporting of assessment data at the university level.

Q:

What changes do you anticipate as you move into the second half of the Academy term? What have you learned from the first two years of the Academy to mitigate these challenges?

A: There is substantial ongoing discussion within the Liberal Education Committee via its bi-weekly communication with the faculty about revising the Liberal Education Program at Southwest Minnesota State University. Data from our Ad Hoc Assessment (AHA) Teams indicated a high-level of confusion regarding the differences and overlapping areas of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) and our Liberal Education SLOs. Recent discussions have indicated that our values should not be compromised by this revision, but that the confusion would be mitigated by this change. The manner of the revision is likely to move to adopting the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum goals as our Liberal Education SLOs. This process is moving faster than originally expected and it may affect our project as we would then have to provide support for programs to revise their program-LEP SLO matrices to become program- based MnTC matrices. Since we are currently redesigning some of our processes, we need to anticipate that this could require small adaptations to the new goals. Since the first two years have helped us to develop appropriate assessment processes, we should be able to provide this support without losing our ability to assess our student learning of our learning outcomes.

Q:

How have you used what you have learned about student learning to improve your educational strategies (curricular and co-curricular)? What evidence do you have that your work thus far has improved student learning? What more do you need to know?

A: We have learned that we are assessing the LEP SLOs at the program level, but need to be able to gather universal data to determine if all of our students are meeting the SLOs at an institutional level. If we implement the revision of our LEP described throughout this project update, we will begin to migrate from our Liberal Education SLOs to those of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum goals. It is important to note that this

revision would only be implemented if our campus community has determined by the evidence presented that it will improve our educational strategies.

We have an effective process for co-curricular assessment in place that aligns with our current SLOS. We will continue to collect evidence from our co-curricular programming housed within Student Life, Enrollment Management, International Affairs, Student Success, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Residential Life, Admissions Office, Career Services, and Counseling and Health Services.

Version 5.0 - Response

Q:

Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Primary Mentor:

Bernard Rowan, trowanii@csu.edu, 773-995-2439

HLC Scholar:

Jan Smith, jsmith@pittstate.edu

Q:

What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Reviewed by Bernard Rowan (Primary Mentor):

Certainly, the team continues to work actively and thoughtfully on its project. The time spent at the Midpoint appears to have sharpened the team members' perspective on implementation and communication, as well as the need to gather training and reporting even further into a cohesive operating assessment and learning culture. The identification of gaps in LEP assessment and planned survey are important steps to take/be taking in the short run. Even more promising is the thought underway to enhance reporting, training and committee works. The team also is to be commended for pursuing the development of its assessment processes in an environment that continues to evolve and change, i.e. the MNTC goals and need to align with them. These are strengths because they reflect a clear vision and purpose in driving the SMSU project as well as sensible and collegial efforts to adjust plans and timelines based upon intervening experiences.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I concur with Bernie's observations. I especially commend your willingness to take stock of where you are at and then make adjustments to your plan when you realized something was not working the way you needed.

Q:

What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess

and improve student learning?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

Be sure that following the use of this one-time survey that you consider how your processes will avoid the need to re-survey in future around similar matters. One thought, and it's just one thought, is that you might consider de-coupling general education/LEP assessment from programmatic assessment. Sometimes that may help, depending on the institution. Also, institutions sometimes consider taking one or several as opposed to all LEPs and assessing them on a cycle (all LEPs are measured, but reporting occurs on only one or several at a time). These ideas or others may help to counter fatigue. Second, you're now giving a push for enhanced LEP reporting, even as you indicate a plan to change the LEPs to align with MNTC. You may want to consider a phase-in of the MNTC alignment, as it is itself a significant project.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

In addition to Bernie's questions, I don't have a good sense at this time of how you will aggregate data at the institutional level. You mention not only surveying to see where outcomes are assessed but also to find out about tools being used. If you have different tools used in different courses, it will be difficult to get a good picture of what is going on at the institutional level.

Q:

What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

The project continues to evolve and reach success. Think about the apparent multi-front efforts that you are implementing and continuing to tweak. Reporting will change on LEP and program assessment. You also wish to enhance the role of several important committees. You also wish to undertake a revision of general education assessment.

Carefully monitor whether all of this can happen in the next six months or even a year.

You have many programs and courses that now fall into the portfolio of your assessment plan. Maintaining regular communications and making sure that assessment stakeholders receive attention as well as celebrate milestones will be important.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I think Bernie is on target with his comments. I also think you are very much on target with doing a gap analysis. For me, the most critical issue relates to my question in the previous section. I encourage you to give careful consideration to how you will use data. If everyone is using a different assessment method in different courses, then you may find it very difficult to aggregate data at the institutional level in a meaningful way. At a minimum, you need to make sure everyone has a clear understanding of your outcomes. You have a great start with this, in terms of the video you created. Ideally, it would be good to develop an agreed upon measure (e.g. rubric) you can use to gather data in at least some key courses. This will make it much easier to get an understanding of student learning across the curriculum.

Q:

What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

I'd recommend you consider the Henry Ford College network project and their use of Walvoord's assessment steps. This is not to suggest anything in particular but more as a way of reflecting on the streamline/streamlines of your existing processes.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I'm not familiar with this method. However, I agree with Bernie that any method you use should be to refine your existing processes rather than lead to development of brand new processes as you have already accomplished a great deal and have many things working well for you.

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 4.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: We have been consistently following Buena Vista University. There are some correlations between what we are going through and what Buena Vista is going through, although not all relate directly to our project. For example, they have a University Seminar course that is like our First Year Seminars (FYS) and they are trying to get faculty on the same page with that. They are doing summer workshops with their faculty, like we have done with ours. More in relation to the projects, they are working to have a centralized location for assessment data; we also are addressing that issue. They are utilizing Office 365 for that process and that is something we might want to consider for 'in-process' documents and still utilizing the institutional repository for more permanent/final documents. They are focused on "Signature Skills" and in some way, this is similar to our Core Skills, but for us those are additional skills on top of our Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) but for them, they seem to be the focus. They too are focusing on building a culture of assessment, as are we, and we may be able to garner some ideas from what they are doing.

We have recently begun following Wartburg College. In particular, we are interested in their Student Learning Assessment Guide. We have a number of great resources that have been sent out to faculty throughout the past couple of years, but it is likely that many of these documents have been misplaced by individual faculty members. It could be very helpful to pull together all of the information that has been distributed (information on assessment cycle, Program Assessment of Student Learning, template for SLO mapping, template for creating a timeline, etc.) in one document as a user guide that could accompany our Campus-Wide Assessment Plan we are developing. The guide could include completed examples of some of these pieces as opposed to simply having the form or instructions in the plan.

We have also been following schools within our Minnesota State System. In particular, we have looked at Bemidji State University since they are a sister institution within our System. We are interested in how they have included additional non-class duty days into their assessment processes. Currently, we have one Assessment Day, but as a campus, we may want to consider additional days since Bemidji indicates this has helped them make sustainable progress. Another Minnesota State System university we are following is Minnesota State University- Moorhead (MSUM). MSUM's project states, "We have moved program and co-curricular assessment to MSUM's learning management system (Desire to Learn) and enrolled all faculty and staff as "students" in an assessment "class" in order to streamline communication, collection of reports, and reporting of feedback". This could be an interesting idea to consider implementing here at Southwest Minnesota State

University (SMSU) to make it easier for everyone to access assessment data. We could also consider making the course site a developmental course (similar to those we have to take on the code of conduct or sexual harassment) and have multiple choice questions with feedback to ensure that faculty understand some of the basic principles around assessment and the steps required to work through the assessment cycle. We may also want to consider using the focus group interview technique for some of our universal assessments of student learning outcomes that we have found more challenging to assess consistently.

Version 4.0 - Update

Q:

How have you incorporated the feedback from the Consolidated Response to your previous Project Update?

A: We met with our scholar and mentor at the HLC Annual Conference. Our scholar recommended that we have a campus-wide assessment plan. We have begun to codify our campus assessment plan since this meeting. In related efforts, we are enhancing the Liberal Education Committee communications with the Committee on Institutional Assessment and have some “share” meetings tentatively planned. We also revised the Committee for Institutional Assessment (CIA) structure in a meaningful way. Prior restructuring created liaison team networks with several CIA members led by an Assessment Academy member. This coordinated effort provides guidance and feedback to individual programs. For this year, we will alternate our customary CIA meetings with a Liaison Team work meeting and we expect this to enhance our capacity to complete our project. Furthermore, we have used the comments from our mentor to help situate and focus agenda items for discussions of the CIA.

Another consolidated response suggested that we not focus on stars as exemplars for our assessment process. To achieve this, we have planned an assessment poster presentation as a component of our February Assessment Day activities. All academic programs and student services programs will be strongly encouraged to create and present a poster about their unique assessment story. These posters will include programmatic assessment and programmatic efforts to assess Liberal Education Program (LEP) outcomes.

Q:

Your team has reached the midpoint in the Academy. Summarize your team’s accomplishments thus far.

A: Currently, we are pleased with our accomplishments. We devised a project that engaged all of our programs in aligning their program outcomes with our Liberal Education Student Learning Outcomes. These aligned outcomes were mapped across the program sequence. This mapping exercise revealed that we have excellent content coverage from 100 to 400 level. In fact, in all Liberal Education outcomes we are covering the outcomes by greater than 75% of programs in addition to campus-wide coverage in related courses in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. At this moment, it is unclear whether or not programs are assessing each of these outcomes and if they are whether or not they are upper and/or lower division courses. Identification of where the assessment occurs is a short-term goal to determine this progress as we are in the midst of reviewing program annual assessment reports that are a part of the departmental Annual Reports. We have engaged in preliminary discussions regarding other universal assessments that can accompany

programmatically-aligned assessments in order to give a more robust picture of the completion of our LEP Student Learning Outcomes. We have also been able to encourage individual programs to make substantial progress on the Assessment Cycle from stage one which was alignment and mapping to stages two and three which are assessing and analyzing results, to finally stage four which is to use the results to inform the program.

Q:

Describe the most significant challenges and opportunities encountered in the development and initial implementation of your Academy project.

- A:**
- Challenges- we have problems keeping programs moving through the process of assessment. This may be related to time, expertise, campus processes, or other factors. The Matrix Project took much longer than expected but we are now asking programs to provide assessment data from those learning outcome alignments. Programs have not been as successful in completing the Timeline component as they were in completing the Matrix component. We have also seen some evidence that a few programs may be feeling assessment fatigue as they are working on this project and their programmatic assessment.
 - Opportunities- This project has allowed the campus to develop a shared nomenclature and common understandings/articulation around assessment. It enhanced programmatic engagement in these processes and subsequently gave us the opportunity to get individual buy-in. In some cases, this has helped programs coordinate moving from individual course assessment into programmatic learning objective assessment.

Q:

To this point, who has been engaged in the Academy process. Are there additional stakeholders who need to be included in the Academy process? How can they be engaged?

- A:** We have created an HLC organizational structure chart in our efforts to explain the stakeholder involvement and coordination of efforts. The Assessment Academy Team, upper administration and cabinet members, the newly appointed HLC/Assessment Coordinator, the CIA through the liaison teams, and the Liberal Education Committee have all been engaged thus far. Students are the group we still need to engage the most. We tried to do so with the *Magnificent 7* video. This video captures our faculty members providing examples of how the seven SLO's are assessed in their classes. We would like to recreate the video with students talking about learning outcomes/assessment of those outcomes. We need to move from assessment is being done "to" the students and instead have them be an integral part of the process.

Q:

The Midpoint Roundtable will offer an opportunity to review, refocus, and recharge the Academy team's efforts. What particular goals does your team have for the Midpoint Roundtable?

- A:**
- We hope to spend time with our liaisons to gauge our progress and enhance our project
 - Secondly, we look forward to meeting with other programs to discuss how they overcame obstacles and discuss successes they have so we can possibly recreate those successes.
 - We want to use the roundtable to help us to complete the gap analysis of the LEP outcomes assessment and not just the coverage of those outcomes.
 - We need to come out of the roundtable with a push to have programs understand the dual-purpose of assessment of their program and the LEP outcomes. This will help facilitate the completion/revision of timelines and programmatic assessment plans, but will also help us to gauge where programs are in the assessment cycle. We will have just completed submitting to programs status letters about their LEP

outcome assessment. This roundtable should help focus our energy on moving programs who are not far along in this process, but also should help improve the LEP delivery by using data from programs that have assessed these embedded outcomes.

Version 4.0 - Response

Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Primary Mentor:

Bernard Rowan -- Chicago State University -- (773) 995-2439, trowanii@csu.edu

HLC Scholar:

Jan Smith

jsmith@pittstate.edu

Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Reviewed by Bernard Rowan (Primary Mentor):

As the SMSU team reaches midpoint, I think they can certainly be proud of the efforts they're making, the accomplishments, and their forward momentum to complete and further develop their project. SMSU clearly shows in this update an intention to model good practices from other institutions. It bodes well for the development of their assessment culture that SMSU will work to have a centralized location for assessment data, create common documents as examples and as a guide, and utilize professional development days for working on data gathering, gaps in practice, and creating synergies. The team also has followed through on suggestions made in the previous consolidated response. In addition to specifying how they are utilizing the work of other institutions, they have clarified process steps and communications of and between the LEC and CIA as well as mobilized liaison networks. The critical flashpoint work of aligning programs with LEPS as a challenge has been identified, and additional actions are occurring to meet project goals in this area. The team has allowed or acknowledged that in the major actions such as Matrix and Timeline components/stages, more time is needed. They are investing that time to gather needed inputs, analyze, and make appropriate changes. The team also reflects SMSU's embrace of assessment through a shared nomenclature and common set of understandings in the practice of assessment. All of these strengths are strengths because they reflect an institutional team working with colleagues at the institution, with their mentor and scholar, and with the wider collaboration network to achieve success for the project and for the development of good practice in assessment at SMSU.

Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

I fully agree with Bernard, although would like to point out you are really developing a culture of student learning rather than a culture of assessment. In this spirit, I particularly appreciated your comment about moving from assessment being done "to" students vs. having them being involved in the process.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

A: Reviewed by Bernard Rowan (Primary Mentor):

In the previous consolidated response, Jan mentioned questions from the February Assessment Day and their use. It would be helpful to know if they relate to the self-reflection piece and/or how they have followed up on those questions. In terms of this update, my main area of questions relates to encouraging/asking how the team will identify gaps in achieving LEP/program outcomes alignment and what specific means they utilize to overcome the gaps. There are many ways to do that, and the Data Days/Gap Days or "non-duty" days can be a place where this is worked on in a focused way. How are you analyzing and triaging whether programs assess each of the outcomes and whether that is in an upper and/or lower division course? Also, what do you look for as using results of assessment analysis to inform the program in Stages Two and Three (Timeline Component)? You note that some few programs may be encountering fatigue. How will you/are you respond/responding to that important and understandable moment for these programs?

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Thank you for another helpful update. Bernard asks some good questions. I am also curious about programs encountering fatigue. It will be important to address this to avoid the danger of losing momentum.

Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

Your indication is that now and in the next six months you will be pushing to have programs understand the dual purposes of assessment of LEP outcomes and program outcomes. Consider how your program stakeholders identify their alignment of outcomes and how the reports you receive result in concrete feedback for the program stakeholders, both in terms of their processes and the results to date. Again, there are many factors and many routes to good practice. Your descriptions sound like you seek coverage of LEPs within programs at lower and upper division levels. I think it's important for programs to consider how they map outcomes coverage and depth across a program. Second, as the work of developing SMSU assessment culture enters its next phases, consider the format and process by which the assessment team reports back to units/collaborates with units to provide support. It sounds as if you seek some common benchmarks/incremental process fulfillment steps across programs for making timeline progress. Make sure to consider how your feedback to programs mirrors for them the results you seek. It makes good sense to consider these and related questions and concerns at the upcoming Roundtable to encourage completion of the gap analysis.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

In addition to Bernard's comments, I encourage you to think about how you will know if changes made to the curriculum based on assessment data are actually effective. Also, think about building in a reflection on your current assessment practices so you can make any changes to processes/measures, especially when some of your efforts are still in their infancy. Finally, as you think about communicating with stakeholders, how will you communicate with external stakeholders.

Q: What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

While a previous response did indeed indicate that there is no particular need to over focus on stars as exemplars, I find myself wanting to recommend at this stage that you let colleagues hear from a few of the high achievers so they can see how the different stages have been accomplished from peers. Another possibility is to think about including students in the assessment team. One way to encourage positive energy is when faculty and staff see that students not only have completed assessments but that they realize how the assessments enable them to document and publicize their learning. Student members of assessment committees or a focus group might enhance good practice. I also wish to make clear that creating a university assessment plan isn't a "must" at this point. It did sound to me at the HLC Conference and it continues to sound like you have in place many elements of an institutional assessment plan. Consonant with your stated intention to publicize these positive developments, at some point the team may find it useful to compile, write and present an institutional plan.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I think the Midpoint Roundtable has the potential to be a very valuable resource as you have identified some important aspects you want to accomplish, especially in terms of being able to learn from other institutions.

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 3.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: Our Assessment Academy Team has been following Eastern Oklahoma State College and Cleveland State University. We chose these institutions because they too were focusing on liberal education assessment through professional development days and assessment days. We wanted to learn from other institutions how best to track assessment initiatives and to document evidence. We will be seeking other institutions to assist us in our deliberations.

Version 3.0 - Update

Q:

Describe your team's initial implementation of the project you have designed.

A:

- Implemented a Matrix project to have each program align their student learning outcomes with the liberal education program (LEP) outcomes
- Promoted the notion of the Assessment Cycle
 - Identify & Define SLOs
 - Determine Assessment Measures & Collect Evidence
 - Analyze Evidence
 - Use Evidence to support and improve program
- 3 Assessment days provided for faculty feedback, input, and work
 - August Professional Development Day (mentioned in Response 2.0)
 - November Roundtable – Introduced Timeline
 - January Professional Development Day – Update from fall and spring process
 - February Assessment Day – workday spent with programs

Q:

How has your project developed and changed since the last posting?

A:

- Focused on being more specific with instructions to programs
- Provided Roundtable workshop aimed at
 - Identifying major courses that have assessment data related to LEP outcomes
 - Identify assessment for the embedded student learning outcomes (SLOs) that are in courses
 - View models of timelines and discuss when SLOs are to be assessed
 - 66% of program represented
- At the February 3 Assessment Day, we had the programs/departments self-identify where they were at on the Assessment Cycle. This gave programs the opportunity to talk about what they needed to do to

move along in their assessment process.

- Have been more intentional about involving faculty from across many programs and departments in presenting examples of assessment in courses and/or programs
- Have hired an assessment coordinator to be part of Assessment Academy team beginning summer 2017. The Provost has been the acting Assessment Coordinator this year due to an extended illness of the previous Assessment Coordinator.
- Convene coordinated meetings between the Liberal Education Committee and Assessment Academy Team to discuss assessment of the liberal education program.
- Have meetings monthly with the Committee on Institutional Assessment which is the all-university committee that drives assessment beyond the Assessment Academy project.

Q:

How have you incorporated the feedback from the Consolidated Response to your previous Project Update?

A:

- In addition to the written response in the Collaboration Network, we sought individual phone meetings with both our Mentor and Scholar for additional support. Our Scholar and Mentor reminded us that we should be persistent and to work with the programs that are moving forward. They encourage that we meet one-on-one with the programs that are a bit sluggish. We have created a liaison network in which Assessment Academy Team members are paired with Committee on Institutional Assessment members to meet with certain programs to discuss and document their progress.
- In monitoring progress, we created status reports for each program and shared with the deans and department chairs. We wanted the administration to also be a leverage point for the programs to encourage them to move forward on the Assessment Cycle.

Q:

Thus far, what have you discovered about student learning at your institution.

A:

- That many programs have indeed begun developing solid plans for that are aligning nicely with the Assessment Cycle.
- That much work and understanding of student learning is necessary.
- Faculty are beginning to understand and embrace how assessment activity can enhance student learning in their course(s) and/or program(s). They recognize that it is imperative to access what they value.
- We are beginning to see institutional buy-in to how the assessment process can impact student learning.
- The development of a short video highlighting the seven liberal education program (LEP) outcomes was well-received by faculty. The video seemed to articulate how the LEPs are embedded throughout the curriculum.

Q:

How will you continue to advance your project in the next six months?

A:

- Programs are responding to six questions from a February Assessment Day.
- Programs will be providing an example of evidence prior to the end of the term
- Assessment Coordinator will be added to the Assessment Academy Team beginning in summer 2017
- Coordination between the Assessment Academy Team and the Liberal Education Committee will lead to improvements in the liberal education program.
- Our ultimate goal is to get all of our programs completely through the Assessment Cycle and have the programs showcase how they are using the feedback for enhancement.

Q:

What challenges do you anticipate? How will you address them?

- A:**
- Continue momentum over the summer is and likely always will be a challenge
 - The re-addition of a more dedicated Assessment Coordinator role will be highly useful.
 - We are little concern that as the faculty begin a conversation about revamping the LEP they will want to delay any further assessment efforts towards the current LEP
 - Engaging additional faculty to highlight their assessment efforts and act as 'shepherds' of assessment. We note that we have a few programs that are outpacing others. Instead of always showcasing the stars, we want to highlight programs that are overcoming barriers, but still persevering.
-

Version 3.0 - Response

Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Primary Mentor

Bernard Rowan, 773-995-2439, trowanii@csu.edu

HLC Scholar

Jan Smith, jsmith@pittstate.edu

Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Reviewed by Bernard Rowan (Primary Mentor):

The SMSU team continues to accomplish the project's vehicles and has begun to tweak and adjust the project based on their experience. This update discusses progress with program alignment of student learning outcomes and liberal education program outcomes. Programs have started to use elements of an assessment cycle to gather and analyze data. Regular status reports begin. The Team has continued institution-wide professional development days and related communications to develop synergy and maintain momentum, including a video on the LEP outcomes.

Involving more faculty in the assessment project and identifying a new assessment coordinator are other strengths for this update. I especially applaud the creation of the liaison network and think its operation can accomplish even greater solidity across departments in the months ahead.

These are strengths since the institution's goals have been and remain the development of an institutional culture of assessment that accomplishes student learning for its general education program and program curricula.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Bernard makes some good observations. In addition, it seems you have engaged faculty in a collaborative manner, allowing them to critically self-reflect on where they are at with assessment rather than imposing mandates. This combined with clarification of expectations provides a solid foundation for getting increased faculty involvement.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

You report that you have followed the assessment work of two other institutions, which is a good idea. I wasn't clear on what in particular you identified from their efforts that is helping you to track assessment initiatives and to document evidence.

Likewise, I'd like to know how you have made more specific your instructions to programs (first item in the section on how the program has developed and changed).

I'm also not clear as to what or how coordination between the Assessment Academy Team and Liberal Education Committee occurs, and what kinds of improvements are anticipated. It would be good to identify and share whether those planned improvements will come as a result of the findings of the programs' assessment cycles and efforts at program-based improvements, or if another context for improvements is envisaged.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I'm curious about the nature of the questions from the February Assessment Day and how you are using the responses to these questions. This may be the self-reflection piece you referenced in your update. If so, did you identify any specific training needs and can these be addressed with use of liaisons or do you need more training opportunities.

Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor)

I'd like to reiterate a point made by Jan Smith in the Version 2.0 response. Consider specifying further the steps that will carry forward the second project phase (2016-2017-2018), which highlights interventions for programs whose outcomes aren't yet aligned. This doesn't seem to be a major issue in your update, but you do identify a few "sluggish" programs and a concern about faculty wanting to delay. Since examples of evidence will be submitted at end of this term, the next steps are critical. In order later to reach your third project phase (feedback loop), general program alignment with the LEPs should have occurred. For example, you might consider developing a series of discrete steps for the liaison network's work to help units overcome any hurdles in data collection.

I think the team's continued use of professional development days, the activities of the liaison network, the involvement of a new assessment coordinator, and continued identification of program stakeholders can achieve general program alignment of SLOs with LEPs.

I like the mention of not over-focusing on stars. It's good to honor the efforts of all departments and participants. Since assessment is an ongoing process, a key is to persist in the effort of continuous improvement.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Your concern about faculty wanting to delay assessment because of plans to revamp your LEP is quite valid. One way to address this is to highlight how current assessment data can be used to inform those revamping efforts. Of course, if you frame things in this way, you need to make sure you use data accordingly, but it makes a lot of sense to use an analysis of

what you are already doing as one component of moving forward. I would be less concerned about momentum in the summer. Assessment naturally has periods of fits and starts, but as long as you keep moving forward overall, that is what is most important. Perhaps you can take advantage of the quieter summer months to reflect on accomplishments and further plan next steps.

Q: What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

Given the success of your LEP short video, I'd like to suggest that at some point you consider another on the assessment of LEPs and what the data shows as to student learning and progress. I think SMSU will have a story to tell about this project as it has informed the further development of your assessment culture, all as a way of improving student learning and publicizing that important accomplishment.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I'm more of a fan of activities to promote meaningful discussion than simply impart information, but you are the best judge of what is most helpful for your campus.

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 2.0 - Project

Q:

What projects have you been following on the Collaboration Network? What have you learned from the experiences of other schools that is useful to your project?

To learn more about the progress and development of other projects, get alerts by following other projects.

A: Each member of the Assessment Academy Team was asked to review other assessment projects that were part of the Collaboration Network. We will be discussing these projects throughout our project planning time to add nuance to our own project completion.

Recently, I reviewed the University of Northern Iowa's project completion report because as a former dean at UNI, I was interested in the progress of the *Liberal Arts Core Assessment Experience*. UNI's Liberal Arts Core is similar to SMSU's Liberal Education Program (LEP). Some of the tactics pertaining to vetting all aspects of the assessment project through the various university units are tactics we should replicate at SMSU.

A team member reviewed Eastern Oklahoma State College's *Transforming General Education Assessment* project. This project was chosen for a few reasons few reasons: 1) the project is about general education program assessment which coincides with our project and 2) the project addressed "Institutional Cultural Buy-in" which is a significant piece of our ongoing assessment work. In reviewing their Assessment Schedule, we will determine if we could emulate their layout with our LEP. We are also interested in how they disseminated their assessment evaluation work in order make the curriculum when needed.

We also reviewed Calvin College's *Assessing the First Year Experience* project. This project reminded us that the work we are doing with our Ad Hoc Assessment Task Forces in which we are collecting data on how our Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) are being assessed throughout first year seminars (LEP 100) and the rest of our Liberal Education Program.

Version 2.0 - Update

Q:

How has your project developed and changed in the months since the Roundtable?

A: Our project has not changed very much and we are still on target with what we wanted to

do. As with many things in higher education, some things may be moving slower than we expected. With the unexpected resignation of our Assessment Coordinator last spring due to medical leave, we had a slight setback in time and communication and therefore may be a bit behind in our initial target dates, but we now think we will be able to catch up this fall with that work.

Another part of our project is to systematize and improve assessment work of the Liberal Education Program (see link). This work is already underway by the Liberal Education Committee (LEC) and the Committee for Institutional Assessment (CIA). We will work with both committees to make sure that the LEP Assessment Plan and the subsequent Ad-hoc Assessment (AHA) Team reports are being vetted and changes are being made.

The AHA reports revealed that we have each of our student learning outcomes (SLO's) situated within courses in the general education/liberal education sequence, but we have to do a better job of capturing the assessment data from the courses and closing the loop on the Assessment Cycle.

Link 1: [Liberal Education Program](https://www.smsu.edu/academics/liberaleducationprogram/?id=11486)

<https://www.smsu.edu/academics/liberaleducationprogram/?id=11486>

Q:

How did you incorporate the feedback that you received on your previous posting?

A: Both our mentor and our scholar reviewed our previous posting. They both provided feedback. We reviewed the feedback and decided that it was best to bring them both together in a conference call. In talking to them directly, we realized that both of their perspectives gave us insights to our project. Our mentor, being an assessment coordinator at his institution, was able to share how to engage other faculty members into the process.

The scholar, having been a reviewer, provided us parameters on how to focus on the project and not to be stymied by other aspects of the Assessment Plan. During the HLC Conference, I met with our mentor. He was very helpful in providing ideas on how to keep our Assessment Academy project central while at the same time connecting the project work to other aspects of the Assessment Plan. We also discussed what we needed to do in order to prepare for our Focused Visit.

Link 1: [Assessment Glossary](http://www.smsu.edu/administration/committees/cia/?id=11768)

<http://www.smsu.edu/administration/committees/cia/?id=11768>

Q:

What are the plans for the next six months? How will this work advance your project?

A: On August 15, 2016 we had a Professional Development Day with our faculty and staff members. We shared what we have accomplished thus far on the Assessment Academy project. We told them that our next steps were to provide them a Status Report on what they have submitted. A Status Report would let them know what they have submitted and to what extent was the submission complete. We would also provide them feedback on the quality of the submission and suggestions for next steps. Our intent is to complete the Status Reports and the sharing within the month of October 2016.

While we are doing this, we will work with our Director of Institutional Research and our Chief Information Officer to review the utility of our data repository and digital archival

capacity.

In November, December, and January, we want to provide a venue for round table discussions and showcase opportunities for various program assessment examples.

Once faculty members are aware of how to best assess the situated learning outcomes, we will then start collecting examples of assessment results to determine if students are meeting the SLO's. If they are, then we will view these assessments as viable and continue their usage. If not, then programs will have to re-assess the instruments used so that they can be assured that the SLO's are met. This review of the assessment results will allow programs to close the loop by having assessments inform the content, instruction, and evaluation of the embedded SLO's. The review of assessment results, the analysis of the results, and usage of the feedback will allow us to complete the Assessment Cycle.

Q:

What challenges do you anticipate? How will you address them?

A: One of our challenges is to get faculty more engaged. We have to promote assessment as a model of program improvement and not just an HLC leverage point. We will be reviewing the Collaboration Network to determine how others have engaged faculty members to do the rich work of assessment. We want all our faculty members to have an articulated understanding of assessment; therefore, we will continue to consult with each of our programs on a one-on-one basis to make sure their program-based questions and concerns can be asked and vetted. We also want to provide each program contextual solutions.

We are in search of a new Assessment Coordinator; therefore, we are concerned about sustainability. The Coordinator worked with all campus committees that has assessment as one of their priorities. We want to maintain stability with these other committees so they will not feel rudderless. As Assessment Academy Team members, we will be bridging the gap until a new Assessment Coordinator in place.

Version 2.0 - Response

Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Primary Mentor:

Bernard Rowan, trowanii@csu.edu, 773/995-2439

HLC Scholar:

Jan Smith

jsmith@pittstate.edu

Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

Good use of Collaboration Network projects! These institutions' efforts can demonstrate to

internal stakeholders the probity of your project, as well as its feasibility. You have identified specific experiences that can assist in meeting project goals of communication, using an assessment schedule, sharing assessment evaluations, and student learning outcomes data collection.

Your update shows developments and adjustments that evidence institutional commitment and flexibility with implementation. Leadership changes to assessment personnel do create transitions. Data collection and feedback loops are perennial challenges, and it's good that your colleagues and you recognize the opportunities for improvement.

I am glad that you find the interactions with Dr. Smith and myself helpful. Please be sure that if you have questions about your upcoming Focused Visit to direct them to your institutional liaison.

It's nice to learn of the successful Professional Development Day and plans for status reports. Both enhance communication. Likewise, working to develop SMSU's institutional data gathering and archiving capacity makes sense. I also think the effort to build mentoring across programs will generate additional synergies for your project's successful completion.

Overall, these successes and strengths of your work to date evince institutional commitment and improvement along the path of the project's intended goals.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I very much agree with Bernard's observations. I especially commend you for making good use of the Collaboration Network as many institutions have addressed the very same topics you are working on in your own Academy project.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

My one question concerns the use of assessment instruments. Consider according to your institution's needs prior to changing an instrument/s the implications of the data. If SLOs aren't met, it may indicate a faulty assessment instrument, but there are of course other possibilities, including how a course and/or specific instructors in specific sections cover the SLOs. Depth and coverage of SLOs and diversity of instructional styles, teaching materials, and course modalities all factor in. What are the curriculum maps indicating? Please see the suggested resource below.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

I think that Bernard's questions are definitely useful to consider as you move forward. In addition, I have questions about your next steps. While the activities you outline for the next six months appear to be on target, I don't have a good sense of how these steps will be accomplished. You may well have already developed the details for these steps, but it would be helpful to provide a little more detail in future postings so that we can give more specific feedback.

Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

As you develop your culture of reporting based upon data analysis and closing gaps/feedback loops, consider a means for using targeted reporting to capture what's needed, such as a form or section of your reports entitled "Key Changes". Consider letting programs consider and implement changes over a period of time in your assessment cycle before making changes, a period appropriate to your institution and its needs.

I think this update shows you are using communication and mentoring across programs to increase stakeholder buy-in, both of which are good ideas. Also consider such means if they are possible/suitable/desirable as the following: you could highlight those "stars" whose work shows success and local buy-in to create more/better converts to the project's vehicles. You could provide recognition to all participants and a celebratory event/s for project or participation milestones.

Continued progress toward and actually identifying a coordinator also will help the Academy Team and SMSU's progress. Continued success and good luck!

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

Again, I concur with Bernard's comments. In addition, you had mentioned in a previous posting about developing a project management plan to address identified gaps. Although it appears quite straightforward at first glance, you have some key steps planned for the next six months. Development of a project management plan will assist with the timeline and concrete implementation of these steps, the who, what, where, when, etc.

Q: What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor):

Regarding assessment design, instruments, and factors to consider in analyzing data, please see the following:

<http://cop.hlcommission.org/Assessment/weissman.html>

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar):

The Assessment Commons website (see link below) has a wealth of resources that may be of use to you at this stage of your project. I especially encourage you to take a look at some of the sample assessment handbooks.

Link 1: [Assessment Commons](http://assessmentcommons.org/)
<http://assessmentcommons.org/>

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan

Project: SMSU's Assessment Project

Version 1.0 - Project

Q: Describe the project you developed at the Roundtable. Focus particularly on the general strategies you developed. (500 words)

A: Our project is focused on affirming that SMSU students are meeting the seven university outcomes that our campus refers to as Liberal Education Program (LEP) outcomes. These outcomes are listed here:

<https://www.smsu.edu/academics/liberaleducationprogram/?id=11486>

Our project has two distinct goals: (1) systematize and improve assessment work of the LEP already underway by the Liberal Education Committee (LEC) and Committee for Institutional Assessment (CIA), and (2) help programs that offer baccalaureate degrees align their program outcomes and assessment efforts with the LEP outcomes. Both goals fit with SMSU's LEP vision that LEP outcomes be integrated throughout students' plan of study.

To achieve these goals, the academy team has developed four phases for the project.

Phase 1 (2015-2016): Over the course of the first project year, the academy team will focus on two mapping projects akin to the assessment inventory strategy we learned about at assessment academy. The first map will capture all the work the LEC and Student Affairs have already done to assess the LEP outcomes. This map will describe results from curricular and co-curricular areas and identify gaps in that work. The second mapping project is more complex. The academy team will work with SMSU's Committee for Institutional Assessment to create a protocol for interviewing every baccalaureate degree granting program on campus and mapping how their existing outcomes may already align with the 7 LEP outcomes. Here again the mapping of these programs will focus on identifying gaps and embedding LEP outcomes into each programs' course sequence.

Phase 2 (2016-2017 & 2017-2018): In this phase of the project, the academy team will analyze gaps revealed in phase 1 of the project. The team will make a project management plan that will address those gaps. Right now, this phase of the project is not well defined because phase 1 will dictate the shape of this work. We anticipate that when we identify gaps, we will work with the programs on embedding the missing outcomes across the program's course sequence. We will also assist programs in identifying assessments that align with learning and program outcomes.

Phase 3 (2017-2018): The third phase of the project will model for our campus how to "close the loop" when doing assessment. Plans for improvements related to the work of phase 2 will be developed and implemented. In order to involve stakeholders in the process, we will plan a series of Data Days to assist programs in closing the loop. We will also solidify our assessment repository so that all assessment data is archived and can be retrieved.

Phase 4 (2018-2019): In the final stage of the project, we will present our work to the academy and focus our efforts on sustaining the work related to phases 2 and 3 of the project.

In every phase of this project, the academy team will use four strategies learned from the academy that include: communicate to campus frequently, develop faculty skills, assess the process, and celebrate accomplishments.

Q: How will your project contribute to making assessment an activity that leads to the improvement of student learning?

A: Our project has the potential to improve student learning by allowing the campus to discover what students are already learning and determining if that learning meets the LEP goals. The project will also provide the campus with evidence so that future student learning can be improved by affirming what works and revising what doesn't work with respect to curricula, instruction, delivery, assessment, evaluation, and resources.

Q: What are the desired outcomes of this project? How will you know that you have achieved each of these outcomes?

A: There are two core outcomes for this project. One is directly related to affirming student learning and the other is related to changing the campus culture to support that project.

Outcome 1: Affirm that SMSU students are meeting the seven LEP outcomes throughout their careers at SMSU.

Evidence that Outcome 1 is met: Evidence of student learning will be available for each LEP outcome at the first, second, third and fourth years of study. There will be a clear alignment between LEP outcomes and the outcomes of baccalaureate programs. Evidence of student learning will be used to make incremental improvements for student learning in the LEP curriculum.

Outcome 2: A culture of assessing for student learning will be evident throughout the institution.

Evidence that Outcome 2 is met: Everyone at SMSU will be able to articulate how student learning in the LEP is assessed, and each person (faculty, staff, or student) will be able to articulate their role in that assessment. Moreover, everyone at SMSU will understand that assessment is not just about HLC compliance; it can be a meaningful form of learning and inquiry.

Q: What serious challenges do you expect to encounter? How will you deal with them?

A: We anticipate four major challenges that include: faculty resistance, financial challenges, technology infrastructure, and a possible shift in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC).

To address faculty resistance, we will focus on communicating clearly and building on what faculty are already doing. Some of this work could include providing faculty with opportunities to further develop their skills in the area of student learning assessment. Moreover, we will focus on developing allies that already support assessment efforts as a way of diluting the efforts of our campus's vocal resisters. Finally, we will change our script from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning which we believe is much more palatable for our faculty.

In responding to financial challenges, we will focus on protecting the resources our campus already has devoted to these efforts including: 6 credits of course reassignment each semester for the Assessment Coordinator, preservation of the Director of Institutional Research position, preservation of the budget for HLC initiatives, and preservation of the budget for the Committee on Institutional Assessment.

In terms of technology infrastructure, work to develop a digital archive for assessment data will be undertaken by the Assessment Coordinator, Provost, Director of Institutional Research, and Chief Information Officer to develop an infrastructure to support the work of assessment. This project is one that was suggested to the campus in its recent accreditation visit.

Changes in the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MTC) could require SMSU to make changes in course offerings and/or credit hours as they relate to the LEP curriculum. The assessment academy team can plan for this challenge by making sure that the LEP assessment plan it develops is flexible enough to accommodate this kind of change.

Q: Describe the specific steps you will be taking in Year 1 to develop and implement the early stages of your project.

A: Over the course of the first project year, the academy team will focus on two mapping projects akin to the assessment inventory strategy we learned about at assessment academy. The first map will capture all the work the LEC and Student Affairs have already done to assess the LEP outcomes. This map will describe results from curricular and co-curricular areas and identify gaps in that work. The second mapping project is more complex. The academy team will work with SMSU's Committee for Institutional Assessment to create a protocol for interviewing every baccalaureate degree granting program on campus and mapping how their existing outcomes may already align with the 7 LEP outcomes. Here again the mapping of these programs will focus on identifying gaps and embedding LEP outcomes into the programs' course sequence.

Version 1.0 - Update

Q: Please confirm that this Activity is ready for review.

A: This project is ready for review.

Version 1.0 - Response

Q: Please give your name and contact information (email address and/or phone number).

A: Bernard Rowan (Primary Mentor)

e-mail: trowanii@csu.edu

phone: 773-995-2439

Jan Smith (HLC Scholar)

e-mail: jsmith@pittstate.edu

Welcome! I am pleased to have the opportunity to be your HLC Scholar and I hope that you find your participation in the Academy to be both productive and enjoyable. Please don't hesitate to let either Bernard or myself know if we can be of assistance in any way.

Q: What are some strengths of this project/Academy work? Why are these strengths?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor)

This project presents an outline for improving general education learning and assessment. It also outlines the improvements of program learning and assessment in connection to general education. The project is now in Phase 1. A strength of the project is that SMSU has in place institutional resources for assessment and an existing assessment practice. Another strength is the intention to utilize curriculum mapping and a closing the loop phase that should assure learning extends from general education courses into the students' program/major coursework. Finally, identifying areas of curricula, instruction, delivery, assessment, evaluation and resources will provide specific foci for analysis and improvement. These strengths reflect the institution's commitment to developing its assessment culture through a systematic quality improvement project and process enhancements that achieve wide institutional participation.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

I agree with Bernard's comments and note a number of strengths of this project. As your primary mentor points out, your focus is on student learning, which is central to the success of any Academy project. In addition, I commend you for taking the time to systematically exam and build effective infrastructure to support ongoing assessment. I also think it is a strength that in establishing infrastructure, you are building on existing practices that are either working or can work for you with some modification. This demonstrates that you are capitalizing on your existing strengths, thereby acknowledging successes to date and maximizing current resources. You are to be commended for inclusion of co-curricular assessment in your project, as this will give you a more complete picture of student learning at the institutional level. Finally, your project is well thought out and appears manageable in scope.

Q: What remains unclear or what questions do you still have about this work to assess and improve student learning?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor)

In terms of areas needing clarification, the project team might clarify further the actual stakeholders who in Phase 1 will map program outcomes to LEP outcomes, working with the academy team and CIA. Since SMSU anticipates tracking of co-curricular and student affairs learning, consider including this aspect of student learning in the mapping exercises. For Phases 2 and 3, consider the specific pivots around which "gaps" will be triaged in terms of coverage of outcomes across learning experiences and the levels of learning for particular outcomes. Also, the team should consider how they would involve program faculty in the mapping exercise, communication of efforts, and development of improvements. For Phase 4, SMSU might consider how the presentation of work could publicize learning to external as well as internal audiences, in particular with respect to culminating program learning experiences as evidence of summative learning.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

Again, I concur with Bernard's comments. In your posting on Institutional Context, you state that a major focus of your Academy work is to "develop a plan that clearly articulates how the CIA, Liberal Education Committee, and assessment coordinator will work together to create a genuine and intentional Assessment Plan..." Are there opportunities to lay the groundwork for this goal in your initial phases or is this something you will address in Phase 3? Although it is evident that the Academy Team is building on previous work of these entities, it is less clear how these key constituents will be engaged in the four phases of the project, with the exception of working with the CIA in Phase 1.

Q: What are some critical things to which the institution should pay attention as it plans its work for the next six months?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor)

Over the next six months, the team will finalize planning for and then implement the curriculum mapping projects. In particular, the second mapping project might be optimized through attention to a template for mapping that will generate the desired inputs of existing outcomes and coverage as well as make clear the gaps to be addressed in subsequent phases. Faculty involvement and collaboration with the Academy team and institutional assessment committees as a style might encourage wide participation and success. Consider emphasizing the importance of communication within programs among faculty and between all programs and the committee together with sharing of sample submissions to create synergies in this phase of the project. A newsletter and participation campaign to communicate the project phase and celebrate milestones might encourage project outcomes as well.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

Again, I concur with Bernard's comments. The most critical thing to pay attention to in this first six months is your existing campus culture, as you note faculty resistance as a potential major challenge. Given you are a unionized institution, I am assuming that you have strong shared governance on your campus, so how have you involved faculty in the development of this process? Will you need to do any pre-work with campus prior to the interviews with programs in order to communicate your intentions and create buy-in as well as to prepare programs for the interview process? While newsletters can sometimes play a role, think about what would be the most effective channels of communication on your campus.

Q: What are some other possibilities or resources that might contribute to the success of this project? For instance, can you suggest resources such as books, benchmarks, instruments, models, and processes?

A: Reviewed by **Bernard Rowan** (Primary Mentor)

In terms of additional resources, given the institution's second outcome of creating a culture of assessment, please consider examining aspirational peer institutions' institutional assessment plans (many available online), HLC documents on developing an assessment culture (in particular the somewhat dated but still useful Assessment Culture Matrix/2002), and assessment literatures on curriculum mapping. One suggestion is below as a link.

Reviewed by **Jan Smith** (HLC Scholar)

In addition, the Collaboration Network has lots of practical information, with many schools working on projects that are of relevance to what you are doing. It might be helpful to take a look at other relevant projects to get some ideas that you can evaluate for your own institution rather than try to come up with everything yourself. If you click on "Browse the Network" in the left hand navigation pane, you will see a list with several topics you can select.

Link 1: [Establishing a Culture of Assessment](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40253350?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)
http://www.jstor.org/stable/40253350?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Scholar(s): Jan Smith

Primary Mentor(s): Bernard Rowan