



HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

230 South LaSalle Street, Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604-1411
312.263.0456 | 800.621.7440
Fax: 312.263.7462 | hlcommission.org

September 30, 2021

President Monica Posey
Cincinnati State Technical and Community College
3520 Central Parkway
Cincinnati, OH 45223-2690

Dear President Posey:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission staff received the report on improvements of assessment of student learning. No further reports are required.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2023 – 2024.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is Jeffrey Rosen (jrosen@hlcommission.org).

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: September 30, 2021

STAFF LIAISON: Jeffrey Rosen

REVIEWED BY: Sherilyn W. Poole

INSTITUTION: Cincinnati State Technical and Community College, Cincinnati, OH

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Monica Posey, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 7/1/2021 on improvements of assessment of student learning.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2019 Comprehensive Evaluation.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The interim report was organized to present evidence of the activities and initiatives implemented to respond to the recommendation from the site visit team who reviewed the Year 4 2019 Comprehensive Quality Review. The interim report included descriptions of the assessment cycle, policies, and tools which guided the College's efforts to show progress assessing common learning outcomes and program/department learning outcomes. The interim report also provided evidence to show how the learning outcomes assessments are used to improve student learning. Links in the interim report take the reader to documents including publications and tools which support the activities. A lengthy Appendix included reports, outcome summaries, rubrics, self-study documents and other evidence to support the assessment activities and initiatives.

REPORT SUMMARY: While the HLC Team which conducted the 2019 CQR site visit affirmed CSTCC "met all Standards and Criteria completely," the Team recommended an interim report to address assessment processes and to provide evidence the information from assessment activities is used to improve student learning. The assessment activities and initiatives included focusing on Program/Department Learning Outcomes (PLOs/DLOs), Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), and Co-curricular Learning Outcomes (CCO). Calendars for assessment activities and dates are set annually by the Office of the Provost and the Learning Outcome Assessment Committee (LOAC). The Academic Policies and Curriculum Committee (APCC) is responsible for vetting and approving the PLOs/DLOs for each program/department. APCC members include faculty and academic administrators.

- Faculty chairs of each Academic Program or Department create a 3-year plan for assessing one third of the PLOs/DLOs each year. The Program's or Department's Annual Self-Study include reports of the assessments. The Annual Self-Study "provides a standard template for reflecting upon and documenting key components and metrics of an Academic Program for continuous improvement." The Annual Self-Study is required to provide documentation of program outcomes including "licensure pass rates, employment), advisory board composition and input, completion rates, student engagement activities, etc."
- Included in the Annual Self-Study is identification of the PLO/DLO assessment planned for the coming year and "results and data analysis of assessments conducted during the previous year." The Self-Study is also used to "document assessment-based changes made to their curricula in support of continuous improvement to student learning."
- Self-studies have two levels of review by the Provost's Office; the first level is conducted by the Dean to ensure all requirements are met. The second level of review is conducted by the Provost, Associate Provost of Accreditation and Assessment, and the administrator-co-chair of LOAC. The Review Team meets with the Dean to review the self-studies from their Division and uses a rubric to provide feedback for each Academic Program and Department. "The Review Team also identifies and compiles college-wide patterns of strength and opportunities for improvement that emerge from the review of Self-Studies."
- After all self-studies are complete, the Provost's Office produces a report "detailing the process and key learnings."

The Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC) directs the assessment of Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs). Members of the LOAC include eight faculty and three administrators. The LOAC has "created a three-year cycle for assessment of all ILOs." The ILO assessment process begins in the late summer/early fall semesters, continues throughout the year and culminates with reports presented during the following fall to the College at large." Assessment of CCOs is also under the direction of the LOAC and "mirrors the ILO cycle."

The interim report included comprehensive descriptions of the activities and initiatives CSTCC implemented which focused on the assessment of Program/Department/Institutional student learning outcomes. Documents included in the Appendix supplemented the descriptions of the processes and included reports of PLO/DLO/CCO assessments. The interim report identified where to find information on improvements to student learning based on the results of assessment activities.

REPORT ANALYSIS: CSTCC developed an academic process and procedure manual to guide the College's assessment activities and initiatives.

The College's policy about assessment includes two main goals:

- Students participate in assessment throughout their life at CSTCC and
- The assessment process includes collecting and analyzing information from graduates, employers, advisory board committee members, and other external sources.

The assessment cycle includes four steps:

- Planning
- Conducting
- Review and analysis of data
- Implementation of change

Institutional learning outcomes (ILOs) (general education) are directed by the Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC). LOAC also guides the assessment of the co-curricular (CCO) learning objectives which follows the ILO process. The review of the 11 ILOs "determined...the ILOs effectively capture both the College's General Education Outcomes and Co-curricular Outcomes." Subsequently, the CCO learning outcomes were integrated into the Institutional Learning Outcomes to facilitate assessment. The LOAC's activities begin in late summer/early fall and continue through the following fall. Data are collected throughout the year and are analyzed during the summer. The analyses result in recommendations based on the findings. The LOAC creates an annual report of the previous year's activities, findings, and recommendations. The annual report is shared with the CSTCC community each Fall.

The LOAC developed an Assessment Handbook which serves as a resource for faculty as they conduct PLO/DLO/CCO assessments. A review of the Assessment Handbook table of contents shows it includes information on a variety of topics to guide the assessment process and provides directions for reviewing and analyzing assessment data. Continuous improvement is the goal of student learning outcomes assessment at CSTCC.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), Department Learning Outcomes (DLOs), and Co-curricular Learning Outcomes (CCOs) are guided by the Annual Academic Program/Department Self-Study. The Academic Self-Study is a crucial aspect of the PLO/DLO/CCO assessment process. The self-study gives faculty the opportunity to:

- reflect upon the program
- review internal methods for assessment and program improvement
- review trends in enrollment, graduation, and resources
- create a strategic plan to position program in an ever-changing environment
- plan, track and reflect upon program assessment.

The two levels of review of the PLO/DLO assessments include one conducted by the Dean and the second conducted by the Provost's Office. These reviews identify and compile "college-wide patterns of strength and opportunities for improvement that emerge from the review of *Self-Studies*." A process improvement implemented during 2020-2021 was the "implementation of a summary report, completed by each Academic Dean to document... patterns of assessment-based curriculum improvements in each Division and divisional plans for continuous improvement of programs assessment processes, analyses and documentation efforts."

An example of an initiative implemented after the 2020-2021 assessment review was the Dean of Humanities and Sciences "involving students in PLO and ILO assessment process by making certain they know when they are being assessed, what learning outcomes are being assessed, and what rubrics are being used. This practice should create more accurate responses to assessment."

The interim report included extensive descriptions of the activities focused on assessment of ILOs/CCOs and of PLOs/DLOs. The information in the interim report text was supplemented by documents in the Appendix. Documents included the PLO Curriculum Map, the Self-Study Part A, and the PLO Assessment Rubric. The documents also included samples of the results of the assessment process including a Report of Patterns of Strengths & Opportunities for Improvement and the 2020-2021 Level 2 Review Rubrics of Part 1 (Assessment). The LOAC determined the eleven College institutional learning outcomes "...effectively capture both the College's General Education Outcomes (1-11) and Co-curricular outcomes (7-11). The ILOs were grouped into General Education Categories and those that were CCOs were also coded with a CCO number." Grouping the ILOs into General Education Categories (Communications, Problem-Solving, Social, and Professional) facilitated the assessment processes.

ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT: Cincinnati State Technical and Community College is commended for the efforts it is making to improve the assessment of student learning outcomes and to make curricular revisions based on the assessment findings. The interim report submitted by CSTCC provided a thorough, comprehensive, clear description of its responses to the area of concern identified by the HLC Team which conducted the 2019 Year 4 Comprehensive Quality Review visit. The activities and initiatives implemented by CSTCC to strengthen and enhance the assessment of student learning outcomes included faculty, student affairs staff, administrators, advisory board members, and other external resources. Students have also been included in the assessment activities. The interim report presented multiple examples of the ways CSTCC has put its commitment to assessment of student learning into practice across the campus. Reports of the assessment activities included in the Appendix identified the findings and recommendations made based on the data collected and analyzed. Action steps planned and implemented based on the assessment findings were also described in the Appendix. The interim report text and the Appendix demonstrated the extensive assessment cycle CSTCC follows.

STAFF FINDING:

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s) 4.B

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

- Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.
- Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.
- Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

STAFF ACTION: Receive the report on improvements of assessment of student learning. No further reports are required.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2023 – 2024.