The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

Lake Forest Graduate School of Management

1: PROJECT SUMMARY

A: Project ASSESS-2: Design, build and implement a Direct Assessment process and data system for program review

The key organizational areas affected by this action project are:
- Faculty, Academic Management team (Academic Affairs), students

The key organizational processes affected by this action project are:
- Program review and improvement planning
- Accreditation support and reporting
- Indirect assessment - course evaluations

This action project takes what LFGSM has learned throughout the three years of indirect assessment data collection and analysis and leverages those lessons learned into the design, build and implementation of a Direct Assessment process and data system. The project scope includes curriculum alignment, rubric development, data system (Taskstream) implementation, staff, student and faculty training, up to initial data collection.

2: PROJECT RATIONALE

A: Both the 2013 HLC Reaffirmation Visit and the 2014 HLC Systems Appraisal Report identified Direct Assessment of student outcomes as a key opportunity for institutional improvement. The Academic Management team (Academic Affairs) and HLC Strategy Forum team identified Direct Assessment of student outcomes as the highest priority opportunity for academic and process improvement for the institution.

The initial phase of the action project contains a search for an appropriate computerized Direct Assessment data system, and alignment of program competencies, program goals, program competency rubrics, course goals, signature assignments, and learning objectives. This work needed to be completed before Taskstream system design, implementation and training could begin.

We anticipate that the action project will also include a pilot data collection and analysis phase before all courses go "live" with Direct Assessment.

3: PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES

A: The action project goal is to design, build and implement a Direct Assessment process and data system for program review which supports Program Improvement Plan development for the MBA degree program, and supports accreditation evidence.

Milestone Goals:
- June 30, 2015: Alignment of program goals, program competencies, program competency rubrics, course goals, signature assignments and learning objectives [Completed]
- August 31, 2015: Direct Assessment computerized system to house data and facilitate analysis and improvement plan development [Completed]
- March 31, 2015: System selected
- June 30, 2015: System contract secured
- August 22, 2015: Build and implementation
- August 31, 2015: Indirect Assessment evaluations live (cut over from Metrics that Matter)
- August 31, 2015: Begin pilot for Direct Assessment of signature assignments with small-scale training completed
- September 1, 2015: Build Program Review process and calendar
- January 1, 2016: Student electronic portfolio available
- June 30, 2016: Fully trained faculty, staff and students
July 1, 2015: Begin staff and faculty training for pilot
August 1, 2015: Begin student training for Indirect Assessment evaluations
August 31, 2015: Begin student training for Direct Assessment of student assignments
February 2016: Begin faculty training through Faculty Academy Certificate

Progress Measures:
- Design, build and implementation milestones are met on schedule and within budget
- Indirect Assessment evaluations are comparable in workload and functionality to prior system
- Direct Assessment pilot of student assignments begins on schedule

Formal Evaluations:
Formal evaluations of the action project will take place monthly with the Vice President and Chief Academic Officer, and quarterly in alignment with Academic Affairs Board Committee meetings.

4: INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT

A: Faculty are integral to the action project, in that they have overseen and participated in the curriculum alignment phase. The Direct Assessment project will take what they have experienced and learned over the three years of indirect assessment data collection and analysis and apply it to the Direct Assessment project. They will participate in training initiatives, data analysis within their benches and certificate groups, and drive the formation and execution of program improvement plans derived from the data.

Students are key users of the Direct Assessment data system, so their acceptance and understanding of the data system, as well as the goals underlying Direct Assessment, is critical to achieving cooperation. The ability of students to track their individual progress against program goals, course goals and competencies is critical to their persistence, motivation and validation of the value of their degree achievement.

The Academic Management team (Academic Affairs) welcomes the advancement forward to Direct Assessment, providing a newly available data source to drive program improvement plans. The development of competency rubrics based on the AAC&U VALUE rubrics and Degree Qualifications Profile offers a new opportunity for benchmarking student outcome data against other institutions, and clearly directs course goal construction based on masters degree level competency mastery standards.

5: PROJECT CONTROL

A: The project co-leaders are responsible for regular updates to the Vice President and Chief Academic Officer project sponsor. Regular updates will also be delivered by the project co-leaders to the Academic Management team and faculty.

The Vice President and Chief Academic Officer project sponsor is responsible for updates to the LFGSM Leadership Team, the President, and the Academic Affairs Board Committee.

Progress measures are listed in Question 3 above.

6: ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS

A: Project completion challenges include:
- Competing priorities and workload for the project co-leaders
- Difficulty building and customizing a new data system
- Lack of engagement by faculty, staff or students
- Operationalizing processes and timelines for Direct Assessment pilots and rollout

7: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A: LFGSM is a very small institution that currently offers only one degree program -- the MBA.