

## APPENDIX V: Faculty Survey on Assessment, Executive Summary

The Faculty Survey on Assessment, administered during the Spring of 2011, satisfies both the ACCJC rubric (see Appendix II, p. 1) — under the category of Sustainable Continuous Quality Improvement, which calls for the “evaluation of student learning outcomes processes” — and the LMC Shared Governance Council charge (see Background, p. 1) to “evaluate the effectiveness of the TLP.”

The 37-question survey was completed by 168 full-time and adjunct faculty, many of who also took the time to write 821 related comments:

Full-time faculty: 97 (87.4 percent of 111 full-timers)

Adjunct faculty: 70 (24.6% of 285 adjuncts)

Not specified: 1

Of those completing the survey, 53.9 percent reported teaching at the community college level for one to 10 years, and 46.1 percent reported teaching 11 or more years, with 16.2 percent teaching more than 20 years.

Among the notable survey findings:

■ Despite faculty concerns over the years about the accreditation commission’s assessment initiative, a majority of faculty responding to question number 6 reported they found course-level assessment useful in making changes to their instructional methods and/or course structure.

■ Most full-time faculty responding to questions 31 and 32 think the assessment model we have been creating piece by piece since 2004 is confusing and/or complicated, and support revision of the assessment model and its timeline structure. Many comments speak to the need for simplicity and flexibility in a new model.

■ Finding time for assessment is a considerable issue with faculty, and those responding to question 34 support the use of institutional flex time for assessment, as well as integrating the course- and program-level assessment dialogue into regular department meetings.

■ Leadership in assessment at the college level is still an area in which few faculty express an interest. Only 15.7 percent of full-time faculty and 22.4 percent of adjuncts responding to question number 24 are either very interested in, or willing to take a turn at, assessment leadership at the college level. However, many more full-time faculty (37.1 percent) and fewer adjuncts (10.3 percent) are willing to lead assessment at the department or program level.

Those interested in a detailed look at the survey results can find both the raw data (a 41-page PDF of the Survey Monkey results) and the verbatim survey comments (a 58-page PDF of a Word document) on the college’s intranet, the LMC Public Drive. It is located in the “Assessment at LMC” folder in a sub-folder labeled “Assessment survey.”

Here is an abbreviated section-by-section synthesis of the survey and comments:

## **I. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES AND PARTICIPATION**

Questions 1 and 2 were designed to ascertain work status and number of years teaching at the community college level, since we wondered whether those characteristics might be relevant depending on the nature of each survey question. Interested readers may view the raw data of the survey on the P-Drive to see the part-time/full-time response breakdown of each question, as well as the associated comments.

There is a high level of participation by full-time faculty in assessment, especially at the course level: of those responding, 86.6 percent have written CSLOs and 73.3 percent have assessed them. Given the fact that part-timers often have competing requests for their time at different colleges, it is interesting to note that so many are involved in the assessment process here: 41.8 percent report they have participated in writing CSLOs and 48.5 percent report they have assessed them. While just 25 percent of adjuncts completed the survey, this represents active assessment participation of about 10 percent of the total adjuncts on staff during Spring 2010.

## **II. MOTIVATION IN ASSESSING AND IMPROVING SLOs**

The most important factor, by far, in motivating both full-time (65.3 percent) and part-time (78.8 percent) instructors to assess and improve student learning outcomes in their courses is the opportunity to discover what works and what does not work in the classroom. A close second is measurable improvement in learning, 52.1 and 75.4 percent respectively. Also important to full-time (51.6 percent) and part-time (53 percent) faculty is the opportunity to collaborate with others in their department or program.

A majority of faculty responding to question 6 found assessment useful and made changes in instructional methods and course structure. And many reported that their departments or programs made changes in course outlines, in student learning outcome statements and in the sequence of courses or the program requirements. Still, 31 faculty members who participated in assessment at some level reported the information was not useful at all so they did not make any changes. This is perhaps summed up best in question 7: How useful to you has the assessment process been with regard to what you learned about your own teaching? While 18.4 percent reported it was very useful and 41.1 percent found it somewhat useful, 21.5 percent said it was not useful at all. There were similar results for question 8 that attempted to determine the level of meaningful dialogue with colleagues as part of the assessment process: 25.9 percent found the dialogue very meaningful, 45 percent found it somewhat meaningful, but 16.5 percent reported there was no meaningful dialogue. The comments may shed some light on the issue of a lack of meaningful dialogue: many courses at LMC are single sections, or are specialized and taught by just one instructor, so some reported that there is no opportunity for dialogue in those cases.

Although the response was higher from the full-time faculty (68.9 percent) than part-timers (47.6 percent), a solid majority reported having flexibility in choosing an assessment instrument. That difference is to be expected as full-timers usually take the lead in organizing the assessment processes within their programs and departments.

There are a wide variety of individual comments (49 and 68 respectively) on question 10: What assessment techniques should be available? And question 11: Do you have any suggestions for improving the assessment process? For details see the verbatim survey comments document on the college's P-Drive.

### **III. COMMUNICATION, CLARITY AND SUPPORT**

A majority of faculty responding reported receiving the following types of communication, information and/or support regarding the assessment process on campus:

- E-mail memos and correspondences
- Regular campus-mail memos and correspondences
- Assessment camps/workshops and/or individual coaching
- Presentations, reports and/or Q&As at department or department chair meetings

And full-time faculty members (42.9 percent) are much more likely than part-time faculty (28 percent) to have heard assessment presentations, reports and/or Q&As at Academic Senate, GE, CTE or other campus meetings.

Despite all the avenues of campus communication regarding assessment over the years, only 26.5 percent of faculty reported they feel very informed about the assessment initiative at LMC. A majority (59.4 percent) reported they feel somewhat informed. This may reflect the confusing nature of the assessment model as it has grown in fits and starts since 2002.

Because the assessment initiative has been the subject of concern among faculty since its inception, question 14 sought to assess how comfortable they felt expressing positive or negative feedback to members of the Teaching and Learning Project responsible for its development. While more than half (50.3 percent) reported feeling either very or somewhat comfortable, nearly a quarter of faculty (23.2 percent) reported they were not comfortable sharing their comments. But those who did share their feedback (45.1 percent) reported members of the TLP were either very or somewhat responsive to their concerns. And 57.5 percent of faculty reported they feel very or somewhat included in the assessment process at LMC.

Most faculty report being very or somewhat clear about assessing student learning outcomes at the course and program level, but it is another story at the institutional level. The assessment of ISLOs beyond their own departments appears to be clear to just under 50 percent and unclear to more than 30 percent faculty responding.

The good news is that more than 85 percent of survey respondents reported they are very or somewhat clear on the relationship between assessment and the course outline of record structure. That ties back to the data from section 2 that many faculty members made changes in course outlines as a result of course assessment. In addition most faculty clearly understand the importance of student awareness of course outcomes: nearly 75 percent of respondents reported including CSLOs on their syllabus for every section of every course they teach. Another 13.2 percent include CSLOs on the syllabus for some course sections, and only 12.2 percent reported they do not include CSLOs on their syllabi.

The course outline of record format at LMC includes a section for listing the criteria for A-level and C-level work used to assess student learning outcomes. Despite the high level of CSLO inclusion on course syllabi at LMC, only 36 percent of faculty reported including the rubric information on their syllabi for every course and section. Another 17.3 percent included the rubric for some course sections, but 46.7 percent of faculty reported they do not include assessment rubric information on their syllabi at all. This may be indicative of differences in philosophy that surfaced during assessment workshops about whether a rubric is a grading tool for faculty, a grading guideline for students, or both.

In terms of support for their assessment efforts on campus, a majority of faculty reported a preference for group coaching in their departments or programs, and expressed an interest in assessment activities during flex. Other help supported by a plurality of faculty responding includes individual coaching and professional development.

#### **IV. ASSESSMENT LEADERSHIP**

While a strong plurality of faculty responding (43.8 percent full-time and 42.6 part-time) reported that faculty should be mainly responsible for coordinating assessment efforts on campus, nearly a quarter said it should be a shared responsibility and elaborated in the comment section that it should be shared between faculty and management. Fewer faculty, but still a plurality (31 percent full-time and 35.1 percent part-time), reported that monitoring the assessment initiative on campus should be a faculty responsibility. Almost as many full-timers (27.6 percent) but many fewer part-timers (15.8 percent) said it should be a shared responsibility. But it was clear from the results that, as a whole, faculty do not believe management should take the lead in either coordinating or monitoring assessment.

However, as noted in the opening, leadership in assessment at the college level is still an area in which few faculty express an interest despite the fact they collectively feel responsible to take a leading role. Only 15.7 percent of full-time faculty and 22.4 percent of adjuncts responding to question number 24 are either very interested in, or willing to take a turn at, assessment leadership at the college level. Many more full-time faculty (37.1 percent) and fewer adjuncts (10.3 percent) are willing to lead assessment at the department or program level. This is, perhaps, because CSLO and PSLO assessment leadership has been contractually assigned to department chairs, and full-time faculty are used to taking turns in the department chair role, but adjuncts generally do not get this opportunity.

A solid plurality of respondents reported in question 23 that the assessment leadership responsibilities should be divided among two or more faculty with shared compensatory load, rather than having a single faculty member devoted to the assessment initiative. This reflects the reality that when the Teaching and Learning Project was recruiting a single assessment leader in 2009 and 2010, none could be found, but a few stepped up when the job was broken into more manageable pieces. And respondents did offer a variety of strategies in response to the open-ended question about effective strategies for recruiting faculty to participate in assessment leadership in the future. Among them were load or monetary compensation, professional development, and building a positive college culture around the assessment of student learning.

## **V. ASSESSMENT DATA, REPORTING AND DIALOGUE**

One topic of frequent discussion around assessment has been the kind of data that should be collected. Some faculty reported in assessment workshops that they prefer data gathered using rigorous scientific methods, while others said they believe data gathered informally can be just as effective. Question 26 was designed to tease out those preferences. And while there is still a difference of opinion it was clear from the survey that most faculty respondents believe that a combination of quantitative and qualitative data gathered informally is most effective in assessing student learning outcomes at the course (51-33 respondents) and program (35 to 26) levels. There is, however, a slight preference for a combination of quantitative and qualitative data gathered using rigorous scientific methods at the institutional level (32-26).

Question 27 highlights agreement by most respondents that individual faculty should primarily determine the types of research methods used at the course level, while department chairs should be responsible at the program level. Opinion was split for assessment of institutional student learning outcomes among faculty (25 respondents), the TLP or other college-wide assessment committee (23) and management (22).

One thing the survey attempted to determine was what approach to the reporting and aggregation of student learning outcome data would best provide a platform for engaging in program or department dialogue around the improvement of teaching and learning. A clear plurality of faculty responding (68 of 147 respondents or 46.3 percent) believe that faculty within each program and/or department should determine the method of reporting based on discipline needs. The survey also found that most faculty responding are comfortable reporting data through word processing forms on the P-Drive (34.1 percent) and through an assessment section in the existing Program Review and Yearly Update process (34.8 percent). Other reporting methods garnering support above 20 percent: hard copy paper forms such as Word documents (23 percent), assessment data management systems (25.9 percent), and faculty creating their own reporting documents (25.2 percent).

Dialogue is a key component of assessment as identified in the ACCJC rubric. Most faculty responding believe that the dialogue around CSLO assessment should be held among all faculty teaching a particular course and within the department hosting the course. For PSLO assessment, respondents said dialogue is best within the department hosting the course. And for ISLO assessment, respondents said dialogue is best at college-wide meetings such as a College Assembly or an assessment seminar, or during Flex workshops.

## **VI. ASSESSMENT MODEL**

As noted in the opening, most full-time faculty responding to questions 31 and 32 think the assessment model we have been creating piece by piece since 2004 is confusing (51.2 percent) and/or complicated (31 percent), and support revision of the assessment model and its timeline structure (65.5 percent). Many comments also speak to the need for simplicity and flexibility in a new model.

Because the Program Review process at LMC has traditionally housed indirect measures of assessment, such as success and persistence rates, the survey sought to gauge whether there was support for housing direct measures of SLO assessment — student learning outcomes — there as well. While 32 percent of those responding said they favor such a reporting process, a plurality (44.9 percent) reported they are unsure at this time. Accompanying comments suggest that while some think it might work, it depends on how it is operationalized: “*Probably a good idea, but we shall see.*”

The last three survey questions were open-ended requests for comments from respondents. Despite the length of the survey — 37 questions that took anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes to complete if anecdotal reports are any measure — faculty were liberal in their written comments.

Question 35 acknowledged we have made progress on assessment at the institutional level but are behind at the course and program levels, then sought ideas about what can we do together to ensure we meet the ACCJC deadline for proficiency. Among the 58 responses were these suggestions:

- Simplify the assessment process
- Schedule assessment workshops and Flex days
- Create an assessment calendar, clarify deadlines and post assessment completions on a public gauge
- Find incentives for adjuncts to join the process
- Compensation: provide stipends or integrate ongoing assessment into course load

Question 36 asked respondents to identify the overall strengths and weaknesses of the assessment initiative at LMC. Key points synthesized from the 70 responses:

#### ***Strengths***

- Flexibility in creating and carrying out assessments
- Collaboration, discussion and dialogue with other faculty
- More attention to student learning
- A greater understanding of what works in the classroom
- Professional development and assessment coaching
- Support from the TLP and management
- Making progress toward meeting the accreditation mandate

#### ***Weaknesses***

- Process is unclear, complicated and time-consuming
- Too much emphasis on bureaucracy and paperwork with no real promise of improving student learning
- Lack of buy-in and understanding of the fundamentals of assessment
- Not enough inclusion of qualitative assessment data
- Needs more equitable work flow
- Problematic leadership
- Politics of assessment and threats of loss of accreditation

Question 37 asked respondents for additional comments about assessment that the survey may have neglected to address. Some felt the survey instrument was too long — “*I am exhausted*” — and their frustrations about its length were exacerbated by the fact the instructions did not identify how many questions were included. Other key points synthesized from the 22 final responses:

- Take a minimalist approach to assessment
- Need more information and training
- More focus on community around the assessment initiative
- Schedule an open forum to discuss survey results

There were also a few words of thanks for those actively involved in the assessment initiative.