

The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

East Central College

Project Details		
Title	The ECC Writing Project	Status ACTIVE
Category	1-Helping Students Learn	Updated
Timeline		Reviewed
	Planned Project Kickoff 08-21-2012	Created 08-24-2012
	Target Completion 05-22-2014	Version 1

1: Project Goal

A: Project Goal:

This project will support the current commitment to writing as a means for learning that is part of the ECC General Education Requirements, specifically the Common Learning Objective of Communication. The project will also develop resources to enhance classroom writing practices and approaches. The project will include two distinct but related components: 1) review and assess current practice/implementation of the W as a Gen Ed requirement, and 2) identify the needs of and offer support to faculty who utilize writing in their instruction.

2: Reasons For Project

A: Project Motivation:

Many years ago, as part of the establishment of general education core skills and knowledge areas required for successful student learning, ECC designated writing as a key component. The emphasis was reaffirmed in recent years when ECC determined the three Common Learning Objectives, with Communication listed among them. Students are required to take two W courses for graduation. While the goal was established, and specific W guidelines created, there has been no structural follow-up on the implementation and evaluation of the guidelines in the years since. And despite the W being among the core educational skills, it is not clear what ECC as an institution truly values about writing in the context of learning or how we might improve upon our approaches to writing to better serve our students in today's work and education environment.

In Spring, 2011, a college wide assessment of the Communication CLO, under which Writing falls, was conducted, revealing some fundamental differences among the academic departments about what makes good writing and how good writing is taught in classes. Discussions about the CLO Communication assessment pointed directly to reassessing the W designation and the need for further consideration of classroom assessment and practices.

Thus, several areas for review have been identified regarding the W designation:

- Because the W designation was, at the time, defined and quantified by the English department, and no non-English faculty, many of whom teach W courses, were part of the original discussion, the cross-curricular conversation about writing is missing.
- At the time the definition was established, no mechanism for assessing or reporting on the course fulfillment of the W was devised. As a result, there is no formal means to confirm that students are indeed completing the requirements.
- The W definition has not been revisited since the time it was first established; therefore, the designation needs to be reviewed and possibly revised to better reflect current pedagogy of writing as a means of learning and to coincide with the practices of the faculty teaching W courses.
- In terms of the second project component, the motivation to provide on-going faculty support and development, comes from the variety of perceptions about what constitutes good writing in an academic setting. If we want to encourage and support the use of writing in the classroom, we have to identify current areas of strength and areas for improvement. We would like our institutional approach to writing to align with best practices and reflect the needs of our students.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Organizational Areas Most Affected/Involved:

Academic departments and faculty across the curriculum will be affected and involved through implementation of assessment procedures and on-going faculty development. Any course designated as a W will be under review, but all courses that are potentially W will also be included.

The Assessment Committee and Academic Council will also be affected as curricular changes become necessary.

Student Services will also be involved as a result of course designation modifications and in advisement for students about W courses and requirements.

Institutional Research may be involved for any needed baseline data and follow-up evaluations.

4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Key Organizational Processes/Activities:

Student learning through more clearly defined goals, practices, and assessment of the W designation.

Faculty development through the creation of resources and on-going development opportunities for new and refined teaching practices and through cross curricular conversations about the role of writing in learning.

Curricular development and design as best practices are implemented in courses and new approaches to courses created.

5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: Project Time Frame Rationale:

This project will primarily require faculty participation to define, refine, and implement the W, to measure effectiveness of assessment, and create development resources for ongoing improvement of writing in learning.

FA 2012: Review and revise the current W designation and develop a formal means of assessment; identify current W courses and possible new W courses.

SP 2013: Pilot and review W assessment process and address any necessary changes. Identify needs of faculty using or wanting to use writing as a tool for learning in their courses

FA 2013: Develop resources and support for faculty regarding writing in courses : workshops, on-line resources, campus-wide writing handbook. Implement any necessary changes to W as determined by assessment process

SP 2014: Evaluate project

6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Project Publication and Monitoring:

This AQIP committee has already begun meeting regarding the W designation to review current definition and begin addressing possible changes. The committee has also already met with a majority of all faculty during Spring 2012 In-service to gather initial information regarding how writing is used in classes across campus.

Project members will visit divisions during their meetings to discuss questions and issues regarding the W.

During in-service weeks, sessions will be set aside to inform faculty of goals for the semester and report on project progress.

Ongoing workshops will be advertised and presented to provide all faculty with support for using writing in classes.

Campus-wide promotion can come in the form of flyers and posters promoting the role of writing in learning.

7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Overall Outcome Measures/Indicators:

Assessment process for W designation created, implemented, and reviewed

Faculty resources developed and implemented