



Evaluation Report for AAC&U Quality Collaboratives (QC) Project

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Project Overview

Quality Collaboratives: Assessing and Reporting Degree Qualifications Profile Competencies in the Context of Transfer is a project supported with grants from Lumina Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The project built upon the work of the LEAP initiative and the Essential Learning Outcomes, integrating in the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) to such efforts. Two- and four-year transfer partner institutions from nine states were involved, with a total of 20 campuses participating. The project focused upon three strands:

- Transfer policies: creation of expanded frameworks for documenting student success; recommendations beyond articulation and assessment frameworks; model for policy to incorporate evidence of student learning; translation of DQP into state-level reporting requirements; and policy papers.
- Assessment of student learning: development of tools and strategies, field tested by dyads, that could be used to track and demonstrate outcomes across levels of learning; processes and platforms for assignments that yield demonstration of progressive levels of competence that could be used for transfer; and recommendations on ways to represent assessment results to stakeholders.
- Faculty development: recommend practices and sites for fostering faculty leadership including part-time and contingent; to assess and align learning across field-specific and general education; online toolkit to support faculty leadership development; increased capacity within institution or system; and development of a faculty seminar.

The project proposed to serve as a “proof of concept to illustrate the practices, strategies, and forums through which the intended DQP proficiencies can be achieved, assessed, and reported - both to focus and demonstrate the attainment of competency across the DQP areas and levels of learning, and to facilitate the transition of students from one educational level to the next and from one institutional context to another.” The project sought to test models of integration with the goal of making recommendations about how transfer patterns and faculty and staff can design practices to document attainment and facilitate transfer. The project also sought to address public reporting frameworks to integrate multiple meanings of student success and to make recommendations about changes in transfer policy and practice –while this was not yet achieved, the groundwork has been laid and much was learned about readiness to move to this next step.



And finally, the work sought to develop faculty and academic leaders who can sustain and integrate DQP into professional development opportunities.

Campuses were charged with forming a QC team including three people: one in a leadership role who could influence policy and serve as team leader, another who oversaw assessment, and a third who was charged as a leader of faculty with responsibility for conversations on roles, rewards, and professional development of faculty. Each state also had members in the participating state system office who served as a project liaison. The overarching goal was to mesh the DQP with educational programs, processes and regulatory systems such as transfer policy, that frame undergraduate learning and to build campus, faculty, state system and national capacity to put the DQP to active and productive use. Work with the dyads began in October 2011.

Evaluation and Methods

The evaluation focused upon two main questions:

1. Were the stated goals met in each of the three strands?
2. What was learned that can inform future work related to the three strands?

The evaluation report presents overall findings from the project, followed by findings for each of the strands, and an appendix with a brief overview of the dyads projects.

Methods for the evaluation included text/document analysis and review. All of the reports, presentations, shared readings, etc. housed in the online toolkit were reviewed in addition to the transcripts from AAC&U staff conducted interviews with project leaders. Any presentations and/or conferences where dyad participants presented were also located and reviewed, and institution and system websites were analyzed for any additional materials related to the project. Documents were coded and relevant entries were placed into NVivo software for analysis of general themes within and across the three strands. External websites with relevant information for review included University of Louisville, James Madison University, the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, and the Utah System of Higher Education.

Project-Related Findings

Overall, the Quality Collaboratives project was a success such that other related initiatives have much to learn from the work of the dyads. It proved to be a successful proof of concept project that created institutional leaders and exemplars for others interested in undertaking similar efforts. While the policy strand objectives were not yet met, the groundwork was laid to begin fruitful policy discussions around issues of transfer and alternative means to demonstrate student learning. The potential of this work to provide a foundation for policy is expressed by reports from Oshkosh and Fox Valley in Wisconsin where they state,



Faculty created assessments aligned to outcomes in the DQP. Getting faculty to see how students can begin to develop civic learning in two-year campuses and then scale up those experiences in the four-year campus was a major accomplishment that we hope leads to policy adoption and production of a more cohesive learning experience for transfer students.

Work with the DQP led to several important lines of discussion within and among the dyads. It helped to shift conversations from course counting to determining learning through reviewing evidence from actual student work. The DQP insistence upon demonstrated learning led the majority of projects directly into assignment design and rubric alignment. It helped to make assessment useful to the campuses and gave faculty a clear purpose to engage with assessment-related issues.

In terms of the actual engagement with the DQP, each dyad approached ways into the DQP differently. They also saw this work as supportive of other initiatives on campus and found that to do DQP-related work well required time and cross-campus conversations on how various elements of the students' educational experience fit together. It helped participants bring a student lens to the work, motivated by dyad specific questions of interest related to general education, the usefulness of pre-requisites, course progression, and transfer. The movement towards the larger picture of educational offerings fitting together into a collective whole was fueled in part by examination of the DQP which requires a shift from serving some students to serving all. Further, participants indicated that to make sense of the DQP required not simply looking at individual courses, but the whole of the degree in order to be actionable.

The majority of the work undertaken by the dyads was structural in nature –exploring the necessary foundation for faculty development, scaling, rubric use, and assignment design. Before movement into the policy arena, much work needed to occur on the ground around consensus building and development of a structure to allow for alternative forms of formative learning evidence. In fact, while the dyads were ready for the work through prior involvement in LEAP or past collaborative projects with campus partners, much was learned about readiness needed prior to movement into policy conversations.

The most significant outcomes of the project centered around that of collaboration between dyads and the QC as a whole as well as a focus upon degree-level learning. Active workshops and time for collaboration as part of professional development were key, in addition to intentional facilitation of the conversations and meetings. Participants explored issues of intentionality, how to define and assess student learning in the context of transfer, what levels of learning mean and look like in different contexts, and raised awareness of the importance of curriculum and pedagogy as they relate to intentional sequencing of learning opportunities over time for students. Thus the project was a success around assessment and faculty development.

The role of AAC&U staff and support was invaluable to the project. Each of the dyads reported the impact connection with staff had on their work and how the campus visits provided insightful, meaningful, and helpful feedback. AAC&U staff pushed the dyads to “think bigger and broader” and helped “to get us back on track” in addition to “refocusing efforts around the



DQP.” The meeting structure of the dyads also proved useful due to cross-dyad learning. For instance the University of Massachusetts Lowell and Middlesex Community College dyad expanded their focus to include the area of broad, integrative knowledge after hearing from the other teams. In addition to learning from each other, the teams shared much of their learning externally. The majority of the teams were actively involved in presentations, publications, assignment design work, and sharing knowledge gained through the project through various channels.

Finally, these were industrious teams with plans to continue to advance the work. While there may have been one or two slow months in the reports, overall it was rare to find a report where movement had not occurred. Activity, even in the form of shared meaning-making and discussions, was ongoing. With such an industrious collection of dyads it is not surprising that their future plans include expansion of the group to additional campuses (which several dyads already began during the course of the project) and determination of whether improved curricular alignment fosters student success and timely degree completion for students. It would also be useful to see the work expand to include student affairs and co-curricular interests.

Findings by Project Strand

Prior to moving into findings for each of the three strands, it is useful to make a note that while presented separately these strands are interconnected and advancements in one cannot readily occur without advancements in the others. This project has helped to showcase the role of discussions around alignment as a means to not only connect faculty development efforts with assessment, but to also advance faculty and assessment related endeavors to a level whereby policy conversations may occur.

The other salient point to consider in this work is also the role the DQP played. While much was learned about the DQP and its relationship to LEAP ELOs, the DQP mainly served as a conversation starter –one that did not compartmentalize general education or student learning but instead broadened it. As faculty from James Madison University and Blue Ridge Community College discovered, the conversation was not about faculty who teach specific courses, such as writing, but about how everyone contributes to student learning related to the proficiencies. Participants from California State University Northridge and Pierce College stated that, “In our attempt to help students ‘get it’ in terms of the value of general education we have come to see it more clearly ourselves.” The DQP helped to advance transparency and clarity, but it also took a back seat to larger discussions of shared meaning making, assignment development, and faculty development – in some ways areas needed prior to deep involvement with the DQP document. Thus, while dyads undertook degree conversations, they were not necessarily DQP conversations and sometimes (such as in the case of Indiana) were swayed by state-level policy conversations such as pathways and statewide transferable cores. This is not a finding that is unique to the QC project, but one that has been seen across various DQP projects such that prior to deep engagement with the DQP, a variety of foundational conversations need to occur related to student learning, curricular progression, and intent of educational structures; conversations that generally take more time than was originally planned.



Policy Strand Findings

AAC&U provided information to dyads on transfer policies from across eight states exploring the general education transfer policy, course and program transfer and articulation, cooperative agreements, transfer data reporting, incentives and rewards, and upper-division general education. In addition, teams had access to relevant literature on the “Best Practices in Statewide Articulation and Transfer Systems” (2009) put together by Lumina Foundation, WICHE, and Hezel Associates. Yet, in the dyads proposals for the project, there was little mention of how policy might be addressed and there was confusion in multiple dyads regarding the relationship of the assessment work to issues of transfer policy. In other dyads, when potential policy issues were raised in the proposals (such as credit for prior learning) they quickly fell away due to discussions on other elements of alignment and learning outcomes. Results from surveys of participants from Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College exemplified this lack of connection for the teams between the assessment and faculty development work and the policy implications. Only 39% of respondents understood the relationship of assessment to transfer and 20% understood how to use student level data and rubrics to measure transfer readiness.

While some statewide policy level changes did occur (for instance Utah revised the transfer policy to address assessment and DQP more directly for lower-division work in Regent Policy R470) the more frequent occurrence entailed policy changes at an institution or inter-institution level. State-level policy participants appeared to play the role of communicating information about the work to policy makers and other bodies throughout a state. In California for instance, the state liaison indicated that their role was “marginal” and “focused on disseminating project information across the state.”

While statewide policy was not changed, the DQP project did serve to bring alignment to various state-level efforts. Alignment took multiple forms in terms of bringing together, such as in the case of Oregon and Massachusetts, work on DQP, LEAP, HIPs, Common Core, WICHE, Complete College America, STEM, Guided Pathways to Success Project, AMCOA, and the Multi-State Collaborative. In Massachusetts, institutional membership on various statewide groups was intentionally designed to include overlap with the DQP project leads and leads were actively connected with the Vision Project within the state. Where the state was closely involved in aspects of the project, results were not altogether different from the other dyads where the state served as information disseminator. In Indiana, for example, the state supported the launch of a statewide assignment workshop, but coordination following the event with the state proved difficult and opportunities to connect with state conversations around e-portfolio platforms, prior-learning for veterans, and transferable state-wide core were stalled.

Implications from the project for policy included awareness by state-level policy participants to use mandates to encourage dialogue among faculty members across institutions to ensure greater alignment of learning outcomes, curricular pathways, and general education. While policy was not changed, state-level policy participants did indicate thinking about policy in different ways. In California, policy team members do not envision making changes in policy, but do expect to



encourage greater flexibility in interpretation and implementation of existing policy while also providing increased funding and support for faculty conversations. Massachusetts learned that practice needed to change before policy could follow. Pat Crosson stated, “it taught us the value of developing state policy in consultation and collaboration with campuses” – reinforcing that this work provided the needed first step to meaningful transfer policy discussions. As the Middlesex Community College dyad expressed it, the work is “faculty-led, state-enabled.” Further, the integration of policy leaders into the project teams has led to hope that data from the QC work can inform changes in policy– such that improvements can be seen post-transfer for students due to the alignment around outcomes that occurred as part of the work.

Policies that the DQP work did influence were that of the institution around general education, internal alignment policies, and alternative models for viewing the work. Blue Ridge Community College and James Madison University claimed,

We are used to our traditional structures of breaking things down into General Education areas, which can broadly be described as ‘what have our students learned in each discipline?’ The DQP provides a different breakdown that shifts the focus more to ‘what can our students DO that crosses disciplines?’ It’s not a competing, but rather a complementary model for assessing student competency.

Examples of institution-level policy (broadly defined) changes as a result of the project include:

- Articulation agreements based on alignment of course and program learning outcomes (VA)
- Re-envisioning the collective ownership of general education (VA)
- Creation of new general education paths and related courses (CA)
- Including revised learning outcomes in syllabi (CA, WI, MA)
- Altering numbering of courses to better indicate scaffolding of learning (WI)
- Aligning curricular maps to indicate shared nature of degrees based around skills, as well as uniqueness of programs (WI)
- Creating new frameworks for running internships based on learning outcomes, regardless of disciplinary focus (WI)
- Altering transfer paths to focus on writing (KY)
- Involving advisors in career pathway plans (KY)
- Altering course requirements (IN)
- Discussing transcripts with registrars (IN)
- Creating transfer experience courses (WI)
- Drafting policies for Quest III civic engagement courses (WI)

Two policy related difficulties encountered by the dyads came from difficulty sharing data across campuses and working with faculty contracts or promotion and review. Data issues included



concerns around the security of student work, access to data, and data sharing along with permission to use data sets. The majority of the dyad projects were data-driven in nature such that selection of high transfer courses, tracking students upon transfer, and understanding course-taking patterns and student learning required sharing of data. Some of the dyads were more successful than others in addressing the data issues: for instance Reynold's Community College worked with Virginia Commonwealth University to share data across the institution without releasing unit-record data to one another. California State University Northridge and Pierce College were able to acquire additional funding to analyze student success data, thus sharing was done through similar analysis processes as opposed to linking data; and in Indiana, due to changes in staffing, one institutional researcher was hired in a joint position across the two institutions which alleviated data concerns.

The faculty reward structure, contract issues, and scheduling of meetings for faculty on both campuses proved to be difficult. The reward structure for faculty at the four-year institutions was not aligned to support DQP related work or recognize it as part of the promotion and tenure process, while the two-year partners encountered issues with adjunct contracts and faculty unions related to the project work. While faculty with the ability to alter departmental policy were intentionally included in several of the dyads, their ability to change promotion and tenure processes within an institution was limited. Possible areas to consider in future iterations of this work are addressing data sharing and analysis issues at the outset of the project and working to provide examples of alternative policies related to promotion and tenure. Involvement of the faculty union in discussions prior to project inception may also prove beneficial.

Assessment Strand Findings

“The greatest achievement was the assignment development with peer feedback based on curricula planning, including mapping rubrics to DQP, and assessing related artifacts.”

- University of Massachusetts-Lowell and Middlesex Community College

One of the goals of the QCs was to advance campus reforms related to quality of undergraduate education and much movement occurred within the projects to advance the dialogue of educational quality as it relates to demonstrations of student learning. While the projects did not yet get into recommendations on ways to represent assessment results to stakeholders, the project was a success for providing valuable information on rubric use, assignment design, and alignment exercises. The work to advance assessment conversations and efforts was intricately linked to the faculty development pieces and engaged faculty with meaningful assessment by prioritizing assignments and student work.

Each of the dyads underwent serious deliberations and discussions related to their assessment processes. They all engaged in rubric development or adaptation, either beginning with existing assessment tools and working to refine them or developing entirely new assessments. In order to engage in review and development of assessment, faculty development was needed. The connection between faculty development, embedded assessments, and curricular coherence



framed assessment in meaningful ways, connecting it to teaching and learning, thus giving it value and purpose for participating faculty.

Each of the dyads moved through a similar assessment related process including mapping existing assessment, reaching shared understanding on common outcomes, identifying courses where outcomes were addressed, collecting artifacts (assignments and/or student work), assessing or scoring student work and then revising the assessment tools (assignment prompts or rubrics). Much of this work involved faculty discussions around assignment design. As stated in Oregon reports, faculty “working together to design assignments is unusual because faculty are accustomed to working independently. However, collaboration should enable improvement of individual assignments, thus the entire curriculum shall benefit.”

A focus on embedded assessment throughout the curriculum enabled conversations about scaffolded learning and assessment that is both summative and formative and related to the level of student learning. For instance in Indiana, conversations addressed what 300 level work looks like versus 300 level ready work in relation to what 200 level students need to know. In addition, several of the dyads de-identified two- and four-year student work to prompt faculty conversations about expected level of demonstration and discussion around the activities that would address the outcomes, at the level of interest. The majority of the dyads also utilized or explored technology as part of the assessment process whether for rubric use and review, portfolio, or data collection mechanisms.

Some of the lessons learned regarding assessment from the dyad work include rubric review processes and assignment design. For rubrics, several of the institutions identified rubrics (mainly VALUE rubrics) and began by having faculty review the rubric, not assignments or student work, and revising the rubric from group discussions. Yet, they quickly realized in the norming process that they needed the assignment and student work samples. In addition, faculty realized that some assignments do not explicitly ask students to demonstrate outcomes in question, leading MA to add columns to their rubrics to indicate if an outcome was not assessable because it was not addressed in the assignment prompt. Thus, dyads found that before using a rubric, faculty needed to ask if outcomes are taught as part of the course instruction, if they are addressed in the prompt, and appropriate to be assessed by the rubric in question. Faculty also discovered that no one type of assignment sampled effectively captured all rubric criteria at the levels in question and that while student artifact review was helpful in rubric review; the assignment was needed as well. Backing into realizations that assignments may need to be revised to address the outcomes took some dyads into outcome mapping and others directly into assignment design conversations.

The outcomes mapping work that occurred took very different forms across the dyads such that some mapped their institutions alignment to outcomes internally before working with the partner (Reynolds and VCU for example) while others did the mapping collectively (MA), or allowed individual faculty to map (WI and KY). Some used mapping as a means to aggregate the work, such as tagging outcomes to allow for filtering data in different ways (BRCC & JMU), while others mapped to Tuning disciplinary documents as well – more in the form of a crosswalk



(KY). Mapping entailed indicating what institutions already had in place in relation to broader frameworks or larger issues of alignment. In Indiana, dynamic criteria mapping was undertaken building from student work instead of the curriculum, providing an organic process of unearthing shared faculty values.

The relationship between assessment conversations, rubric review, scaffolded learning, mapping, and faculty development is expressed well by the example of Massachusetts.

Faculty participants were asked to use the assessments in their courses and then return with revised assessments based upon what they learned about its effectiveness in eliciting student demonstration of skills at appropriate levels. In order to be sure the appropriate levels were met, faculty discussed the pre-assessment curriculum needed to help students get there. Along the way assignment design was critical, jig sawing disciplinary and interdisciplinary conversations on learning, and scaffolding of curriculum across transfer institutions. Then when results were received, faculty discussed how to interpret the scores –were they actual indicators of student ability? What role did assignment design play in the scores? How well prepared were students to demonstrate their learning? And finally, all disciplines except business faculty, from the two institutions had shifted from their original individualistic focus, bringing with them assignments they already used, to a focus that was thematic and scaffolded. They began using the rubric formatively for curriculum and assessment design and development, with an expectation that students moving from the 100/200 level courses to the 300/400 level courses would experience an intentional scaffolded approach to developing those skills within the major.

The closer the work got to the ground for faculty (i.e. assignments) the more useful it was. Multiple dyads undertook assignment design workshops, some utilizing the NILOA charrette model, and California began discussions of attempting to integrate the outcomes with grading. Faculty participants explored how best to communicate to students the relationship of assignments to outcomes and the entire curricular structure – opening discussions around transparency of student learning – and a focus on assignments facilitated expansion of institutional engagement with additional partners in Kentucky and Virginia. The heightened realization to communicate to students can be seen in Virginia reports where assignment feedback included requests to, “alter the assignment description to more clearly state those objectives and to include a much more detailed explanation of how the students should be approaching them in the overall context of the assignment.”

In addition, much of the assignment design work did not require additional assignment creation or course development, instead it entailed modifying existing assignments to be more intentional in their elicitation of student learning. For instance, in Kentucky, the ability of this work to be integrated into existing assignments and courses without having to create new features was identified in a footnote of one of the mapping documents: “Many SLOs have the potential to correspond to the Civic Learning and Applied Learning DQP competencies, as many SLOs could be incorporated into an assignment, project, creative task, etc. addressing a significant public problem or requiring the application of learning.” Thus, some dyads started with assignments



and asked which competencies were represented in it and how might that be strengthened and others began with student work and asked how to better acquire student demonstrations. Overall, the projects within the assessment work created inter-related webs of connections, mapping assignments to rubrics, general education competencies, DQP statements, senior capstone experiences, etc. An approach that allowed, as outlined in California reports, for assessment for “commensurability and integrated competencies while preserving the differences in assessments at the course level.”

Finally, it is worth underscoring the power of assessment to alter the dyads approach to supporting student movement through transfer experiences. In Kentucky, the teams developed a Biology assessment for incoming students and transfer students, along with assessments in general education areas that were given to all general education students at the end of the semester. What the results from the Biology assessment indicated was that students were at the same starting level on the biology major assessments, indicating to faculty that it was not actually a lack of consistency of assessment or curricular benchmarks, but that the transition from the two-year to the four-year institution was an advising issue. Instead of needing to better align the curricular, students needed assistance to get into the best courses that prepare them for entry into science programs – a possibility that had not been considered prior and an example supportive of using data to inform decisions and define problems.

Faculty Development Strand Findings

“The project’s greatest achievement included both tools for engaging faculty and staff in assessment and curricular improvement as well as the human capital created by building a community of engaged scholars with fluency and comfort on assessment across campuses.”

- Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College

The project did quite well in terms of building a base of faculty and academic leaders with deep knowledge of DQP related work and integration into professional development opportunities. While discussion of roles and rewards did occur in several of the projects, movement to have this work “count” was not advanced as mentioned in the policy portion earlier. What each of the dyads did offer were rewards in the form of stipends for faculty, with some providing team leaders an additional stipend (MA) or providing faculty members with certificates upon completion of professional development workshops. The workshops were very successful with results from a survey of faculty participants (administered in the Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College dyad) indicating that:

- 81% of faculty felt they had made good progress on plans for assessing outcomes,
- 71% had a better understanding of how to utilize assessment rubrics,
- 80% felt they had built a community of practice, and
- Faculty participants stated they had “better ideas for how to improve their pedagogy through the discussions and open nature of the institutes [workshops].”



In the other dyads additional findings related to faculty development and a sampling are presented below focused around building faculty communities and relationships.

- The other Massachusetts dyad reported “we have learned that we are not so different. The process breaks down barriers. We found that we shared an issue of students lack of integration of skills.”
- California indicated their “greatest achievement has been to organize development of a fellowship of faculty from across disciplines on our campus.”
- Wisconsin dyads re-conceptualized the order of the curriculum for timing and scaffolding based on mapping of skills and development levels.
- Wisconsin broke down cultural misunderstandings between two- and four-year institutions and faculty adapted existing courses around newly shared understandings.
- Kentucky developed closer collegiality between faculty at the institutions.
- Indiana faculty thought more intentionally about design of curriculum and student movement.

To scale the work and foster faculty leaders of campus discussions, several different routes were employed. In Massachusetts faculty developed elevator speeches to get others interested in the work and each year for every dyad additional faculty were added. Additionally, dyads developed tools that could be shared with others (for instance templates asking faculty to share assignments that might be aligned with DQP outcomes for those not involved in the project). In addition a website was created to share assignments and discussions, updates on the project were included in faculty orientation, and centers for teaching and learning introduced assignment recommendations within the faculty handbook (MA). Additional scaling included fostering faculty assessment scholars along with curriculum scholars and developing guiding questions to help faculty use rubrics that may have been new to them. Working on a shared language and description helped to facilitate cross-campus conversations and bring additional faculty into the fold. Partnerships with faculty centers for teaching and learning proved fruitful as well.

Difficulties related to scaling the work, even though faculty leaders were supported and developed, included administrative considerations such as in California. The question of “as more faculty get involved, how do you maintain connections between and among the courses?” spoke to the importance of conversations between faculty members. Regarding conversations, the dyad work also served as a gateway to other areas for collaboration with additional institutions through sharing professional development opportunities, facilitating statewide best practice events (WI), surveying faculty teaching courses related to outcomes of interest to the project, development of a transfer guide (KY), and plans to have faculty exchange course materials and lectures to better understand learning environments of different institutions. In the complete sense of the word, the project was a collaborative.

The most powerful types of collaborative discussions took place in person with multidisciplinary faculty in a variety of professional development opportunities. Some of the topics undertaken in



faculty development (beyond introductions to LEAP and DQP) included assessment in the form of assignment workshops, alignment with rubrics, rubric development, and introductions to assessment for new faculty. Other opportunities included a focus upon curricular issues including curriculum mapping, course design or redesign, and conversations on teaching and shared learning objectives. Additional participants beyond full- and part-time faculty involved in the collaborative work were department heads and students. Workshops involved faculty retreats, conferences, study groups, and data exchanges.

While scoring for rubric work can be done online, in person meetings were required prior and faculty indicated that having the time to meet as groups was incredibly beneficial to advance the work of the project and develop shared understandings. Thus, alignment discussions involved faculty members being in the same room, talking to and with each other, while team meetings helped to focus on refining shared understandings of the project.

It appears the faculty development pieces were most successful when places where collaboration already existed were selected as the area of focus for the project. For instance in Massachusetts this entailed the focus on civic engagement as both institutions had longstanding commitments and work in place (such as wikis and workshops) already addressing different elements. Other ways to develop collaboration included approaching the work, as done in UM Lowell and Middlesex Community College, as a faculty-based action research model, focused on better preparation of transfer students for advanced work. Other successful approaches to the work included engaging in faculty peer feedback processes. Overall, putting faculty in a room together and allowing them space and time to talk was vital.

Participants in the project did in fact develop as leaders, using data to determine next steps, developing plans to communicate to faculty the types of assignments needed for assessment activities, exploring how assessment results can help make student achievement transparent to various stakeholders, and leading general education committees on their individual campuses. They viewed the work as a means to “bring all of the pieces together,” allowing for “connections with institutional missions, existing projects, and our needs and values.” Further the framing lens of the DQP around student success and scaffolded learning allowed for faculty ownership and interest, but partnering with the dyads helped to “shatter illusions about the other institution” and advance partnerships leading one institutional pair to indicate that the “QC project showed us that we have always been partners, but we were not partnering.”

Much like faculty participants sought to scaffold our students’ learning, we need to scaffold our own when undertaking DQP related project work. The approach to faculty development undertaken by the dyads focused upon enhancing transfer student success by building and sustaining faculty engagement with curriculum and learning by reviewing, aligning, and scaffolding the curriculum. While this was accomplished, now, the project is moving towards exploring if the data support the work of the faculty as it relates to student learning.



Project Overviews¹

Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College already had a strong history of partnerships to support teaching and learning prior to this project. They had established working relationships between administrators and faculty that allowed them to form a strong leadership team and pull from prior work. They also had previous experience with transfer partnerships in several fields (Business, Communications, and Exercise Science), yet still experienced program barriers. They believed that to remove transfer barriers for students, faculty must work together to identify common outcomes, courses, and assessments supported by policies and advisors. The two institutions saw this work as continuing on beyond the completion of the project from the onset. They also envisioned movement in the future into areas of competency-based transfer. Their faculty leaders were familiar with LEAP ELOs and developed assessments in four areas of communication, quantitative reasoning, research and analysis, and civic engagement. They listed courses that were linked to outcomes for specific degrees and they sought a smooth transition between institutions but also the support of any student who wanted to fulfill the core general education requirements for transfer to any Massachusetts state university. They worked to refine existing assessment tools and foster alignment.

University of Massachusetts Lowell and Middlesex Community College also had strong prior transfer relationships and close proximity with both campuses located in the same city. They had a history of collaboration in multiple disciplines, and had shared articulation events, worked together on program review, and involvement in the state project of AMCOA. They utilized VALUE rubrics, and focused on Quantitative Fluency in areas with high-transfer rates. They began from the agreement that student achievement of learning outcomes looks different at the associates than bachelor level, but that what that difference is has not been clear. The DQP provided an opportunity to clarify relationships and pilot scaffolded expectations.

J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College and Virginia Commonwealth University were research driven in terms of questions related to arguments they wanted to be able to make about transfer student success in general education coursework. They designed their project very similarly to a research study and undertook some foundational data work prior to involving faculty. They selected five courses for transfer students at Reynolds and then picked matching courses at VCU for native freshmen and sophomores, they also identified three capstone courses with the largest number of transfer students. Faculty participants were full-time who taught selected courses face-to-face and online. Each faculty cohort was nominated by a dean with the goal to achieve internal and external curricular coherence. Transfer support operations were in place at Reynolds, but this work allowed a more systemic view and fulfilled a cross campus need to tighten the alignment of the courses and develop assignments that “cultivate the outcomes of the assessment.” They also used the VALUE rubrics.

Blue Ridge Community College and James Madison University had a longstanding partnership over many other projects including an advising partnership and a guaranteed admissions

¹ Project overviews are not provided for Utah or Oregon due to minimal information available in the shared toolkit postings.



agreement. They considered the DQP as a framework to organize objectives and then moved into integrated learning focused on assignments. The partnership improved upon existing infrastructure by which DQP can be further delineated, defined, and assessed to distinguish levels because JMU was already familiar with DQP and mapping had been done prior. The institutions focused on quantitative reasoning and scientific reasoning and began their project using data to frame issues along with targeted questions about student success.

California State University Northridge and Pierce College focused upon path development, an area of interest and required need in California. They focused on three paths and ended up creating a path development guide for other institutions in California. They had prior shared projects for service learning, and this work was timely due to faculty need to align their offerings to paths. The institutional partners desired more regular interaction of faculty and students across their institutions as well. To do this the partners undertook site visits between the campuses, and held a conference for Cal State and California Community Colleges to adapt the path model.

University of Wisconsin-Parkside and University of Wisconsin-Waukesha worked on a newly approved BA degree including a focus on global studies, cognitive skills and integrative learning, with a strong applied focus. They used a variety of assessment measures including rubrics, ETS Proficiency Profile, prior learning assessment, and began with a very rigorous data analysis plan. They did not get into the proposed data analysis or student interviews; however, they did align the DQP to the new BA program. The DQP helped to organize the BAAS experience, a degree completion program where students come in with an AA degree, in a manner that was clear and easily communicable to their seven primary stakeholder groups: faculty, staff, advisors, students, employers, school districts, and governance groups.

University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh and University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley focused on civic engagement learning outcomes and integration of civic engagement into the curriculum from previous interest and work in this area. They wanted to strengthen connections with student affairs, but didn't really seem to advance that front, yet they were driven by research questions and data needs and linked the project to existing work with high-impact practices. They sought to define and locate appropriate assessments and worked from a list of courses that were approved for civic engagement, looking at success of transfer students, retention, graduation, and grades. They also explored program factors that influence student success and timing of transfer within a program, allowing questions to drive the project with data needs outlined at the inception of the project.

IUPUI and Ivy Tech experienced positive timing of the project focused on engineering and writing across the two campuses. They shared a set of standards and organic rubrics, they had already begun work in writing prior, but administrators realized that to get to competencies the work would need to go deeper than a "received description of values and achievement articulated in a rubric." While there was a leadership transition at Ivy Tech, faculty and administrators undertook time for discussion and planning, exploring the meaning of courses in the context of a student's academic record.



Elizabethtown Community and Technical College and University of Louisville had a statewide transfer policy that was revised in 2011 and in effect in 2012 that states as an assumption the “transfer of general education credits is predicated on the acquisition of competencies in broad academic areas, rather than on comparison of individual courses taken at one institution or another. The issue is not how particular general education courses at the sending institution match up with general education courses at the receiving institution, but how the competencies and student learning outcomes in various general education programs are similar to one another” (p. 3). Such language and a background in Tuning led the project to focus on guidelines for implementation of the general education transfer policy. They also drew heavily from LEAP and sought to show the break down of credit hours by learning outcomes. They undertook data collection from the start of the project and focused upon transparent transfer.