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September 24, 2018

President Scott Ward
West Shore Community College
3000 N. Stiles Road
Scottville, MI 49454

Dear President Ward:

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 assessment of student learning. No further reports are required on this topic.

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2020. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025 – 2026.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at lnakutis@hlcommission.org. Your HLC staff liaison is John Marr (jmarr@hlcommission.org); (800) 621-7440 x 104.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: September 24, 2018

STAFF LIAISON: John Marr

REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

INSTITUTION: West Shore Community College, Scottville, MI

EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Scott Ward, President

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES: An interim report is required by 6/1/2018 on assessment of student learning.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution's 2016 AQIP Comprehensive Evaluation. The team recommended a report on Criterion 4, Core Component 4B "which will help the College to maintain focus and momentum in its work to achieve functional, manageable, and useful assessment processes for the improvement of student learning." The report should contain the following:

- Detailed documentation of the assessments that have been administered up to the time of the interim report for PLOs and Core Abilities (CLOs). Including a list of programs and courses involved in the assessments and the schedule of assessments including those planned following the date of the report;
- Several representative examples of curriculum maps created to identify where the assessment of CLOs and PLOs are taking place in both academic and occupational programs;
- Several representative examples of program and course assessment plans including sample assessment instruments and rubrics used;
- Assessment data for both PLOs and Core Abilities including the number of students and number of sections assessed for each CLO and PLO;
- A detailed summary giving specific examples of how analysis of assessment data has been used at the program and course levels for targeted improvement of pedagogy and student learning.

REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY: The West Shore Community College interim report on learning outcomes assessment is presented in a narrative that contains a wide range of embedded figures (charts, graphs, tables) that display relevant data related to learning outcomes assessment. Although the report doesn't confine itself to the recommended length (please refer to the HLC website), the presentation is, generally, effective and the embedded data useful and pertinent.

REPORT SUMMARY: Following a brief introductory section, the institution's structure follows the organizational pattern suggested in the HLC Team Report of the institution's 2016 AQIP Comprehensive Evaluation. Specifically, the report contains three primary sections:

- *Mapping West Shores Curriculum*
- *Mapping West Shores' Outcomes Assessment Processes*
- *Administration of Learning Outcomes Assessments*

With regard to the first of these, which describes the institution's curriculum mapping processes and results, the report notes that the entire College curriculum has been mapped in alignment with the institution's "*well-established matrix of educational goals and institutional values*," as shown in the figure below.



Figure 1: Diagram of West Shore's Curricular Foundations

The figure displays what the report terms "*the horizontal and vertical alignment of learning outcomes*," which have been developed across the curriculum in a manner consistent with Bloom's taxonomy. The figure is meant to represent the intersection of student outcomes (SLOs), the College's Core Abilities and its Core Values.

At this point the report presents a series of curriculum maps from different academic programs. These include the following, from Marketing/Management and Psychology:

Curriculum Map - MARKETING/MANAGEMENT													
DIVISION: BUSINESS													
DLO 1	Students will apply management theories to make decisions that enhance organizational effectiveness.										HW: Homework P: Project DF: Discussion Forum E: Exam PA: Paper PR: Presentation		
DLO 2	Students will apply accounting information to understand the financial position of an organization and to make managerial decisions.												
DLO 3	Students will analyze quantitative data to make business decisions using computer based technology.												
PROGRAM: MARKETING/MANAGEMENT													
PLO 1	Students will communicate the major concepts of the functional areas of management, marketing, and business.												
PLO 2	Students will describe the legal, social, ethical, and economic environments of business.												
PLO 3	Students will apply decision making processes to organizational challenges and opportunities.												
PLO 4	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the concept of marketing.												
PLO 5	Students will demonstrate an understanding of an organization's management strategies for business												
Student Learning Outcome	Program Outcomes					Division Outcomes			Core Abilities			Row Totals	
	PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	PLO 5	DLO 1	DLO 2	DLO 3	Communicate Effectively	Think Critically	Act Professionally		
I = Introduce	12	12	12	13	10	5	2	8	38	38	47	197	
R = Reinforce	9	7	11	8	10	4	2	2	27	28	27	135	
S = Synthesize	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	24	
Column Totals	23	21	25	22	22	11	6	12	68	69	77	356	

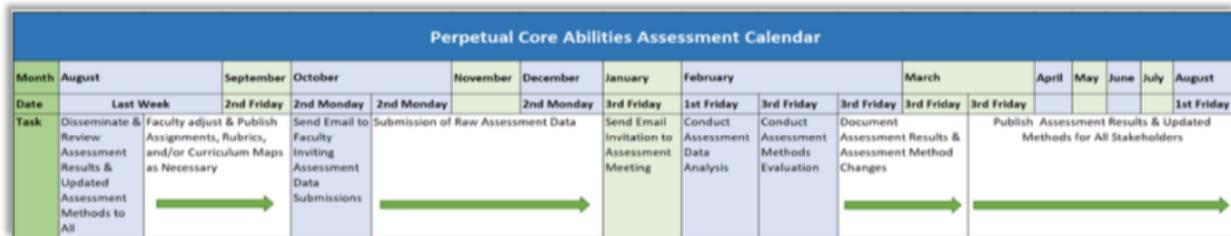
Curriculum Map - Social Science/Psychology														
DIVISION: Social Science														
PROGRAM/Discipline: Psychology														
										Abbreviations				
PLO 1	Demonstrate understanding of major theoretic positions in psychology.										E: Exam			
PLO 2	Convey knowledge of psychological terms/concepts and their appropriate use.										P: Paper			
PLO 3	Demonstrate understanding and application of empirical research in psychology.										F: Final			
PLO 4	Demonstrate understanding of diversity across cultures and persons.										PR: Presentation			
PSY161	Student Learning Outcome	Program Outcomes				Core Abilities								
		PLO 1	PLO 2	PLO 3	PLO 4	Communicate Effectively	Think Critically	Act Professionally						
	Distinguish social psychology perspectives from other perspectives in psychology	I & R												
		E												
	Explain basic principles of social psychological research and evaluate arguments			I										
				E										
	Apply social psychological concepts and research to one's self-concept and to one's decision making		I											
			E											
	Describe the way culture influences social psychological thinking and behavior	I & R				I & R				I				
		E				E				E				
	Write a multi-page APA style report that applies social psychological research to one or more areas of contemporary concern that relies								I					
									p					
	Participate in a class poster session designed to inform others about a social psychological topic											I		
												PR		
	Exhibit professional behavior in attendance, assignment completion, class conduct, teamwork and constructive peer feedback											I		
												PR		

Figure 7: Excerpt from the Psychology Program Curriculum Map.

The report notes that, while the College has clear expectations with regard to curriculum mapping in terms of curriculum alignment with learning outcomes, “it nevertheless values and protects each program’s unique outcomes assessment needs and values,” citing the inclusion of division-level learning outcomes (DLOs) in the Marketing/Management map as an example of a program that has chosen to add an additional element to its map. With regard to the Composition curriculum map (excerpt shown below), the report cites the “strategic work done by the composition faculty to map its curriculum,” in that it meets “nationally recognized standards of pedagogical practice [and] demonstrates a careful scaffolding of SLOs and PLOs...”

Composition Program Curriculum Map								
SLOs, ENG054 Integrated Reading & Writing	SLOs, ENG098 Writing Essentials	SLOs, ENG111 English Comp I	SLOs, ENG112 Eng Composition II	SLOs ENG260 Advanced Comp	PLDs	Core Abilities	College Values	
Construct grammatically correct and coherent paragraphs. Compose a unified five paragraph essay. Employ college level vocabulary.	Write organized essays with a clear thesis statement and supporting details. Connect paragraph-level structure to larger essay structure and purpose.	Compose original compositions that demonstrate effective control of organization, evidence, and details considering audience, purpose, and context.	Compose classical arguments that demonstrate facility with claims, reasons, evidence, counter-arguments, and an awareness of underlying assumptions.	Analyze a variety of professional and academic rhetorical situations and produce appropriate texts in response, including adapting existing texts for new situations (e.g. repurposing an essay for a different audience).	Rhetorical Awareness	Communication	Inclusiveness: Building community through teamwork, collaboration, and outreach.	Creativity: Opening our minds and the minds of our students to infinite possibilities.
Demonstrate college level reading comprehension.	Analyze the purpose, style, and audience of increasingly complex essays.	Analyze situations, images, or texts from a variety of disciplinary and professional perspectives and make thoughtful, evaluative decisions based on such analysis.	Analyze arguments and other academic texts from a variety of disciplinary and professional perspectives and make thoughtful, evaluative decisions based on such analysis.	Analyze readings from a variety of modalities and from varying disciplinary and professional perspectives in order to make thoughtful, evaluative decisions based on such analysis.	Critical Thinking	Critical Thinking Communication	Integrity: Honoring our commitments and promises with openness and mutual respect.	Excellence: Striving for greatness through a positive attitude and continuous improvement.
	Use prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing steps for writing assignments Revise essays for coherence, unity, clarity, and support.	Choose from multiple strategies to undertake writing and research, including prewriting, personalized drafting processes, and peer critique.	Demonstrate control of the writing process from proposing a topic and developing a research plan through conducting research, assembling drafts, revising content, participating in peer review, and final editing.	Demonstrate mastery of the writing process from proposing a topic and developing a research plan through conducting research, assembling drafts, revising content, participating in peer review, and final editing.	Writing Processes	Communication Personal Growth Professionalism	Learning: Creating opportunities for gaining core abilities, workplace skills, and lifelong personal growth.	

The second content section of the report, “Mapping West Shore’s Outcomes Assessment Processes,” begins by noting the “two assessment practices process maps”: the Core Abilities Assessment Practices Map and the PLO Assessment Practices Process Map. These maps show the four stages of the assessment process: planning, data gathering, data analysis, and implementation of improvements. In addition to the mapping, the institution has developed an annual calendar (shown below) indicating how assessment will unfold on a systematic basis each year.

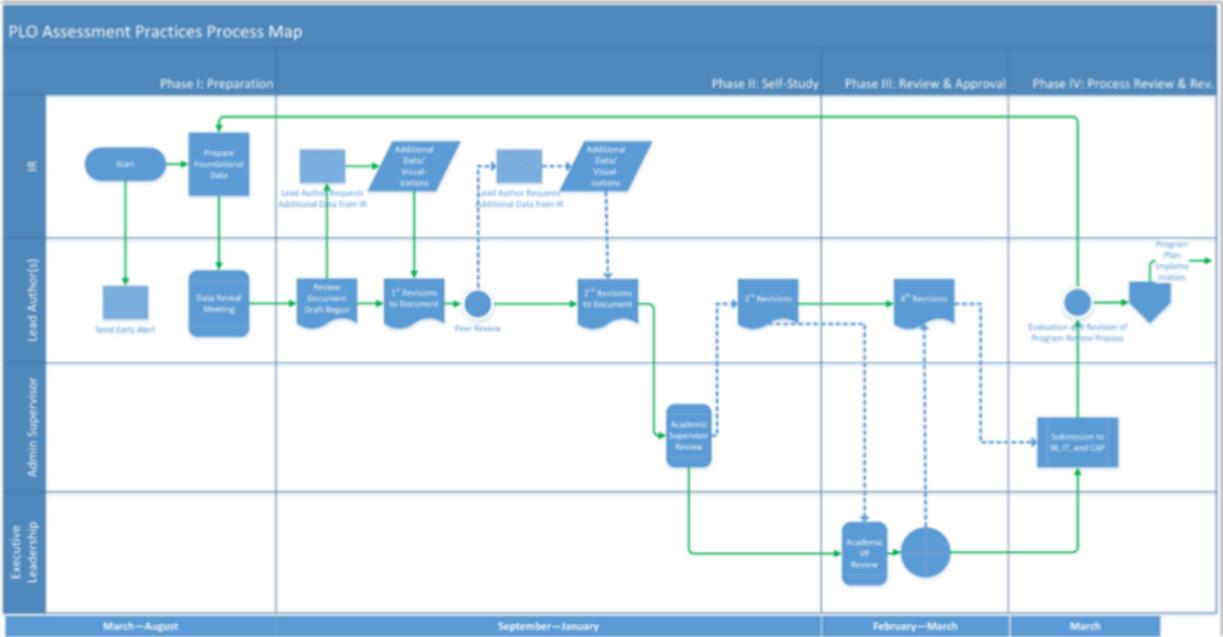


As a means by which to track annual assessment of Core Abilities, the institution has created Gantt charts that project assessment activity through AY2021, with a different Core Ability being assessed each year. One example, shown below, is the Gantt chart for AY2017-2018, during which “Communication-Writing” was assessed.



Figure 11: Gantt Chart for Communication—Writing Core Ability Assessment.

With regard to the PLO Assessment Practices Process Map, the report provides additional graphics, the first of which is the Process Map, shown immediately below, followed by the five year schedule of program reviews—the schedule indicating which programs will be assessed in line with the procedures reflected on the Process Map.



2017-2022 Academic Years Schedule of Program Reviews				
2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Nursing	Accounting	Computer Info Systems	Office Information Systems	Medical Assistant
Marketing Management	Welding	Computer Network Services	Criminal Justice	Mechatronics
History	Chemistry	Corrections	Agriculture	Early Childhood Education
Communications	Philosophy	Literature	Composition	Geography
Art	Physics	Psychology	Foreign Language	Anatomy and Physiology
	Math (Lower Level)	Sociology	Life Sciences (BIO, BOT, and ZOO)	Digital Literacy
		Math (Upper Level)	Music	

Figure 16: Assessment Schedule

The final content section of the report describes what the report terms “*Administration of Learning Outcomes Assessment*.” Here the report focuses initially on the Written Communication Core Ability assessments, the most recent of which took place in Spring 2018—with the Creative and Critical Thinking and Professionalism Core Abilities to follow in AY2019-2020 and AY2020-2021 respectively.

With regard to the Written Communication Core Ability, the report notes the general success the institution has had in assessing these skills, citing the experience/expertise of the faculty as a key factor. To support this, the document provides a series of figures, including the following excerpt from the Writing Assessment Rubric

Core Ability Communication--Writing Assessment Rubric

	4 Highly Competent	3 Competent	2 Emerging	1 Not Competent
Audience & Purpose <i>Who are you writing to and why?</i>	The writing demonstrates a strong and clear understanding of context, audience, and purpose that is responsive to the assigned task(s) and focuses all elements of the work.	The writing demonstrates a competent understanding of context, audience, and purpose and a clear focus on the assigned task(s) (e.g., the task aligns with audience, purpose, and context).	The writer demonstrates an emerging understanding of context, audience, and purpose in regards to the assigned task(s) (e.g., begins to show awareness of audience's perceptions and assumptions).	The writing demonstrates very little to no understanding of context, audience, and purpose in regards to the assigned task(s) (e.g., expectation of instructor or self as audience).
Content <i>The "meat" of the paper. Is there sufficient and appropriate content?</i>	The writing displays all appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.	The writing displays mostly appropriate, relevant, and compelling content to shape the whole work, but includes some irrelevant content to fill in certain portions of the text.	The writing displays some appropriate and relevant content to begin exploring ideas through portions of the work, but includes a large amount of unnecessary or irrelevant material.	The writing displays very little to no appropriate or relevant content.

In addition to the rubric, the institution's report provides two data sets showing assessment results in terms of number of credits earned (i.e. fewer than 30 credits or more than 30 credits) and a figure/chart comparing the two. Here the report provides a summary of notes made by the assessment panel with regard to the assessment process in several areas: Writing Prompts, Sources and Evidence, Syntax and Mechanics, Structure and Organization.

The Critical and Creative Thinking Core Ability will be undergo a pilot assessment in AY2018-2019, using a "proposed" rubric, an excerpt of which is shown below.

WSCC Critical Thinking Rubric, Basic
(w/ Performance Examples and Ratings Descriptions)

Criterion or Question to be Addressed	Performance Examples	Rating=1 Well Below Expectations	Rating=2 Below Expectations	Rating=3 Meets Expectations	Rating=4 Exceeds Expectations
Understand Does the student basically understand the argument?*	State argument clearly Identify key elements, sources, and supports Recognize straightforward examples and applications	Fails to identify key elements or distorts key elements. Fails to recognize examples	Identifies some key elements but omits or distorts others. Shows partial recognition of examples or applications	Identifies key elements, recognizes examples or applications	Identifies key elements, sources and supports, and recognizes examples or applications
Analyze Does the student thoroughly understand the argument?	Classify, categorize, dissect, or distinguish the argument's elements Distinguish fact from opinion Describe connections between elements Describe limiting or contextual factors	Mislabels or misclassifies elements. Fails to establish connections between elements	Labels or categorizes some elements correctly but misses others. Shows partial understanding of connections and contexts	Correctly labels and classifies elements and the connections between them	Correctly labels and categorizes elements, clearly states connections and contexts

The report acknowledges that, despite progress in the area of PLO assessments, challenges remains, particularly in the lack of “*a clear-cut, curriculum-wide method or mechanism for recording and processing large of amounts of SLO and PLO data...[and] most faculty lack expertise in statistical analysis and in the generation of data visualizations.*” To address this issue, the institution is “*actively seeking a technological solution*” that will enable it to gather data more effectively and develop “*data visualizations that are the best means of sharing outcomes measures and achievements across all disciplinary areas.*” Here the report makes reference to the College’s Canvas Learning Management System, and the fact that the Composition Program has been using the Outcomes and Rubrics functions in the LMS to gather course-level outcomes data.

At this point the report describes in some detail the assessment methods employed in one section of ENG112, and provides a number of related graphics including the rubric for one essay, a second rubric with added program-level outcomes, and a figure showing the PLO data for both individual students in ENG112 and for the entire class.

The report’s “*Conclusion*” restates the institution’s commitment to student learning and the “*development of consistent and continuous assessment of Program Learning Outcomes and Core Abilities.*” The report notes that the College’s Board of Trustees understands the importance of learning outcomes assessment and receives regular updates on the subject, which is an area of focus in the new strategic plan. Other key items cited here include the discrete budget funding that has been approved for assessment initiatives and the appointment of a new chief academic officer (CAO), who assumed that office in July 2018 and will lead the institution’s assessment activities.

STAFF FINDING:

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

REPORT ANALYSIS: Materials presented in the West Shore Community College interim report indicate that the institution has made substantial progress with regard to learning outcomes assessment and complies in most respects with the recommendations of the HLC Team Report from the institution’s 2016 Comprehensive Evaluation.

The report shows that the institution has developed curriculum maps for all programs. The mapping activity has as its foundation the institution's educational goals and organizational values, and has integrated outcomes at the course and program levels with the College's core values. This alignment is represented in the figure/diagram included in the report and shown in the Report Summary section above. Examples of the curriculum maps included in the report vary somewhat in format and content, but, generally, demonstrate a commitment to the identification of learning outcomes within programs.

The course and program assessment plans included in the report are represented largely through the graphics created for the purpose of scheduling and tracking assessment within programs. These include the Core Abilities and Program Learning Outcome (PLO) Assessment Practices Process Maps and the Assessment Calendar, which projects in very precise fashion the annual timeline for assessment activity.

The report also provides an extended example of the Written Communication Core Ability, noting the multiple assessments that have taken place, and describing in some detail specifics of these assessments. Included in these materials is one writing assessment rubric, which is designed to assess key components of effective writing—Audience, Content, Structure and Organization, and Source Material, where applicable—and enumerates/explicates clearly the different levels of competency, from Highly Competent to Not Competent. In addition to the rubric, the report provides two data sets that present a breakdown of how students fared in terms of the rubric criteria.

Further, the institution has used the assessment results to identify areas where changes may be necessary to improve the assessment process--as suggested by information/data deriving from the assessment. As noted in the Report Summary section above, the report provides some evidence pertaining to student writing skills in relation to the number of credit hours they have completed; in addition, "*the assessment panel met again to discuss and evaluate the assessment processes themselves.*" These discussions resulted in a number of observations and recommendations pertaining to the abilities being assessed (e.g. Audience and Purpose, Syntax and Mechanics).

Further assessment of Core Abilities is scheduled for AY2018-2019 and AY2019-2020, in addition to the program-level assessments identified in the Program Review Schedule shown in the Report Summary section above, with Critical Thinking to be assessed in a pilot program the first year.

Analysis Concluding Statement: It is evident from the documentation provided in the College's interim report that the institution has established the foundation of a sustainable learning outcomes assessment system. By identifying clearly learning outcomes at the program and course level, along with the institutional "Core Abilities," the College took the first critical step in the development of that system.

In addition, the institution has created schedules and progress charts that will assist both the individual programs and the institution as a whole in planning and tracking assessment activity. The institution is to be commended for its progress to date.

However, there are still assessment and assessment-related areas that need attention on the part of the institution. It isn't clear, for example, how learning outcome assessment results at the course or program level are part of a broader, more centralized system of gathering and analyzing data and employing those data for the purposes of improvement. A question: Once course and program-level assessment has been completed in a given cycle, and the "Assessment Results" have been published, what mechanisms are in place to assure that the data analysis triggers discussions among faculty about curricular change and/or improvement in student learning? The "Assessment Methods Assessment" noted in the Core Abilities Assessment Calendar, suggests a review of the means by which the assessments are conducted, but not necessarily recommendations pertaining to program or course curricula.

Further, and with regard to course (SLOs) and program-level assessment (PLOs), the report recognizes the need for greater capacity in gathering and storing large quantities of data derived from these assessments. To its credit, the institution is actively reviewing possible solutions to this challenge.

The Higher Learning Commission acknowledges the institution's efforts to date and will not require additional reporting. Nonetheless, learning outcomes assessment will require continued attention on the part of the College, as noted in the Staff Finding section above. The institution should assume that the HLC Peer Review Team conducting its Open Pathway Review in 2020 will examine the College's continued progress in this area.

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

The Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2020. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025 – 2026.