Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Report on the Degree Qualifications Profile Project
June 7, 2013

Launch of the Project

In fall, 2012, the ACCJC received funding from Lumina Foundation for the project, Application of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) to Two-Year Colleges in the Western Region. The $450,000 in funding over 30 months was the first grant received by the ACCJC in its 50-year history. All grant funds are dedicated to the project; no funding goes to support the operating and accreditation expenses of ACCJC, and no direct funding goes to participating colleges. Instead, funding is being used to support the training, resources, communication, evaluation, and reporting that are part of the project work, and to facilitate interactions between participating colleges. Two part-time staff members assigned to work solely for the project are paid out of grant funds.

The project, referred to as the ACCJC’s Degree Qualifications Profile Project (or DQPP), got underway with the naming of the General Education/Lumina Grant Advisory Committee. Its members are Commissioners:

Mike Rota, Co-chair
Tim Brown
Susan Murata

Gary Davis, Co-chair
Virginia May
Barry Russell

In October, 2012, an announcement went to the field about the DQPP, with an invitation for expressions of interest. Approximately 30 colleges expressed initial interest in joining the project. Each of those was sent an Interest Questionnaire with information about what their participation would entail. Interest Questionnaires were returned by 22 colleges. This was followed by communications to clarify the colleges’ particular interest. Commitment statements for signature by the college CEOs were sent to the 22 colleges. Seventeen statements were returned, one of them tentative.

The colleges were selected to participate in one of two strands of the DQPP. Fourteen colleges were selected to participate in the Associate Degree Cohorts, an effort involving college-based projects to use the DQP to address an area of improvement. Three colleges were selected to participate in the Tuning Clusters, an effort to align degree-level student learning outcomes for selected AA-T and AS-T degrees to the DQP, using a process called Tuning. The alignment will include collaborative work by discipline faculty from participating community colleges. The alignment work will also establish lines of communication with discipline faculty at the university which receives transfer students from the colleges. The colleges selected for Tuning Clusters were within the service area of California State University San Bernardino and offered one or more of the AA-T/AS-T degrees in Sociology, Communication Studies, and Early Childhood Education.
Degree Qualifications Profile

The DQP is one of several strategies for addressing the call to increase degree completions nationally, including the AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes, the adapted European Union model of Tuning, and the movement for Student Learning Outcomes Assessment largely initiated within single institutions and state higher education systems.

The DQP began as an idea for helping to realize the central goal of Lumina Foundation: to increase the proportion of Americans with high-quality college degrees, certificates, or other credentials to 60% by 2025. Four experts in higher education engaged in a search of the literature and educational research to identify how student learning could be used to determine the value of a college degree. The product of their work, the Degree Qualifications Profile, was launched in 2011. The DQP provides a framework to help create understanding of the value of a degree, and offers a means for establishing both the common and unique elements of a college’s offering within a shared vocabulary around outcomes.

The DQP categorizes degree-level student learning outcomes into five categories of learning, and identifies student learning outcomes in these categories at the associate, bachelor’s and master’s degree levels. The outcomes are not detailed from the perspective of specific disciplines; this is to happen as the DQP is used for creating a particular degree profile.

The categories of learning include:

- Two types of knowledge: specialized and broad/integrative. Specialized knowledge represents the depth of study within a particular area or field, to permit students to learn and achieve mastery. Broad/integrative knowledge represents breadth of study, to provide students with learning about relationships between fields of study and foundations of knowledge.

- Intellectual skills: skills which enable the other realms of learning.
  - Analytic inquiry
  - Use of information resources
  - Engaging diverse perspectives
  - Quantitative fluency
  - Communication fluency

- Applied learning: what graduates can do with what they know.
  - Knowledge and skills from coursework applied in non-academic settings
  - Application of learning from external experiences to work within the academic setting

- Civic learning: related to knowledge of, and commitment to, action within a community context.

The benefit of the DQP is that the framework can move conversation beyond process and format ("How shall we do this work, and what will it look like?") to content more quickly ("What are the competencies and outcomes associated with the degree?"). The categories of learning and
levels of outcomes offer a means for examination and comparison outside the department and college. The DQP also provides a way to identify possible gaps in existing degree level outcomes developed through other processes.

Tuning to the DQP

Tuning is a process initially developed to facilitate acceptance of student credentials across higher education systems in 46 European countries. Sponsored by the European Union and higher education systems across the region, the process brought faculty members together from within a discipline to harmonize their curricula and the many national versions of degrees around defining what a student should know and be able to do in a chosen discipline at the completion of a degree. This was done by defining core areas of competency and identifying learning outcomes.

As adapted for U.S. higher education, which already has similar forms of credential across the states, Tuning defines a discipline’s ‘core’ of learning, making explicit what experts already recognize as key elements within the discipline. The emphasis in Tuning is on faculty expertise. While faculty consult other stakeholders, including employers and transfer institutions, to enable a broad view, in the end faculty define the discipline core. Through Tuning, agreement is sought on the discipline core. However, each program decides how to manifest that core within its own curriculum and institutional mission.

After the Tuning work is done, faculty have a honed description of the discipline core, an idea of career pathways for students in the discipline, and a degree specification (a standardized format containing a description of the degree) to present for curriculum committee or other needed institutional approval that includes:

- Institution Name
- Degree Name
- Purpose statement
- Characteristics (discipline core)
- Career pathways
- Education style (ways in which instruction is offered)
- Program competencies and degree level student learning outcomes

When Tuning is done using the DQP, there is a framework for articulating and organizing the program competencies and student learning outcomes that ensures all areas of learning are addressed. It ensures that degree specifications across disciplines at an institution and those across institutions within like disciplines have a shared vocabulary and the same components in that critical section of the degree specification.

For community colleges, the DQP allows discipline faculty to engage in discussions around student learning outcomes in the degree which don’t come from discipline courses. These learning elements may be acquired from courses within the major itself or from within the general education component. As general education is a critical component of each associate degree, the DQP provides a framework within which the composite of discipline-specific and
outside-of-discipline learning for the degree can be articulated, and then collaboratively refined with faculty across the college to ensure whole-program integrity within the degree.

For an institution, the Tuning process places faculty on the leading edge of defining academic quality, rather than deferring to external forces. It encourages intentionality in educating students, and defines student success in terms of student learning. It builds trust in credentials offered, and sets the terms for comparisons of expectations among institutions. It also provides an excellent tool for student advising and communicating with prospective students.

From the student perspective, the Tuning work resulting in a degree specification provides clear pathways to the degree, explicit expectations for success, and early support for career identification. When a degree specification is included with the student transcript, receiving institutions and employers have a clear sense of the student’s preparation and acquired learning.

The Tuning Clusters

Representatives from eleven community colleges within the service area of California State University, San Bernardino, met at CSU on May 3, 2013 for the ACCJC Tuning Conference. The conference featured presentations on student learning outcomes assessment, the DQP, Tuning, and resources available through the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment. The conference objective was to provide information and training for participants from colleges participating in the Tuning Clusters, as well as participants from other colleges which transfer students to CSUSB with AA-T and AS-T degrees. The degrees for which facilitated tuning projects will occur during 2013-2014 are the AA-T in Communication Studies, the AS-T in Early Childhood Education, and the AA-T in Sociology. The participating colleges (joining multiple discipline tuning cohorts) are:

  Riverside Community College

  Copper Mountain College

In addition, if the project scope can be expanded to include colleges close to California State University Fullerton, then there will be an additional participating college:

  Fullerton College

The Associate Degree Cohorts

Representatives from the fourteen colleges participating in the Associate Degree Cohorts convened in Oakland on April 25-26, 2013, to hear from subject matter experts including an author of the DQP, a researcher from the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, a strategic planner and evaluator from Lumina Foundation, and representatives of the ACCJC. The conference objective was for the colleges to further refine the details of their projects and to establish a work plan for the 2013-2014 academic year in which their projects would take place. The projects being undertaken are:

June 7, 2013
Berkeley City College
Berkeley City College is focusing on its general and PACE Liberal Arts in Social and Behavioral Sciences degrees for the purpose of aligning program outcomes-- including those related to general education/institutional outcomes-- to the DQP. The purpose is to develop a coherent course pathway through the degrees-- including general education courses-- focused on learning outcomes achievement, and to identify assessment activities that can be embedded in multiple courses across the programs to accommodate the course options available to students.

Cerritos College
The Cerritos College project will map outcomes for two AA degrees, one transfer-oriented and one in career-technical education (CTE), to the DQP. Embedded assessments will be developed and explored for use in correlating findings across campus programs. Upon completion of this work, the College will begin implementing processes established in the project across all degree programs.

College of the Marshall Islands
The College of the Marshall Islands will map outcomes for the Liberal Arts Degree-- including general education program outcomes-- to the DQP. Once outcomes have been aligned, the College will identify and develop embedded assignments to apply across the program for assessment. Finally, in preparation for implementing cross-program assessment, the College will develop an e-portfolio or other system for collecting the embedded assignments.

Gavilan College
The work of Gavilan College will strengthen student progression through the Computer Science/Information Technology and Digital Media programs by reducing unnecessary units and increasing student success and preparedness for transfer. The two programs will be aligned to the DQP and clearly delineated course pathways will be developed.

Grossmont College
Grossmont College proposes to align college General Education/Institutional Student Learning Outcomes to the DQP. Signature assignments will be identified, developed, and adapted into/across all programs for evaluating ISLOs.

Kapi‘olani Community College
The work of Kapi‘olani College will be to map program and general education/institutional SLOs to the DQP in the context of the liberal arts degree. The college will identify embedded assessment opportunities that can be implemented across multiple courses to increase cross-discipline faculty dialog and development, and promote excellence in student achievement.

MiraCosta College
Mira Costa College will use the DQP to identify core competencies and outcomes for associate degree recipients across all degrees, examining institutional and general education components, as well as discipline requirements. This work will foster the
creation of clearer pathways leading to degrees and will promote thinking about learning outside of traditional discipline and department boundaries.

Mission College
Mission College will work within selected disciplines offering both AA-T and AA or AS degrees to align outcomes and competencies for the degrees using the DQP framework. The project will achieve increased degree completion through greater student understanding and coherence of degree programs within the transfer path.

Pasadena City College
Pasadena City College will work with the DQP and specialized ABET (Engineering and Technology) outcomes to align programs within related disciplines into an integrated pathway for students. Project goals are to strengthen curriculum and instruction by minimizing unnecessary coursework, increase degree completion, and raise transfer rates.

Sacramento City College
Sacramento City College will work with selected disciplines which offer both AA-T and AA or AS degrees to align outcomes and competencies for all degrees in the discipline using the DQP framework. The work will facilitate increased degree completion rates through greater student understanding of degrees and coherence of degree programs within the transfer path.

Saddleback College
The Saddleback College project is intended to improve employer, community, and student understanding of associate degrees by aligning Institutional Student Learning Outcomes with the DQP. Working with one transfer and one CTE degree, the project will expand on ISLOs and their assessment, to include a significant experiential component and to create signature assignments within programs.

Santa Rosa Junior College
Santa Rosa Junior College will explore the general education (GE) component of degrees across the curriculum. Using the DQP framework, the project will consider more deeply how GE courses work within each program's curriculum to achieve student preparedness for transfer, and how to better articulate this for students. The project will facilitate the goal of seamless transfer for students and provide coherence within programs and in general education.

Shasta College
Shasta College will work with its University Studies degree—designed for both transfer and entry into the workforce— to identify specific learning outcomes across the general education curriculum and core units, using the DQP as the project framework. The project will inform programs across curriculum, deepen understanding of the University Studies degree for transfer students, and will allow the college to identify unique areas of institutional excellence.
West Hills College Coalinga

West Hills College Coalinga will work with selected career-technical education degrees to align the programs, including general education courses, using the DQP framework. The focus of this project is to develop a coherent plan of courses for students pursuing CTE degrees.

Project Timeline

The college projects will be completed during the 2013-2014 academic year. Needed institutionalization efforts (curriculum committee approval, insertion of content into the college catalog, scheduling changes, communication of changes to counselors, etc.) will be concluded in the subsequent semester, so the work can be sustained and can inform other areas across the college.

Next Report

A project update will be presented to the Commission at its January 2014 meeting. The next project report will be presented to the Commission at its June 2014 meeting. Updates and reports will continue in this pattern for the duration of the DQPP.
DATE: June 7, 2013

MEMO TO: Commissioners

FROM: G. Jack Pond, Vice President of Team Operations

SUBJECT: Vice President’s Report

Teams, Trainings, and Materials

Team and Self Evaluation Training materials were reviewed and changed during the spring of 2013 and will undergo review and revision as necessary this summer. Commission staff has worked diligently to keep abreast of the rapidly changing federal regulations and to update all Commission training materials to reflect those changes.

Team Training (2) and Self Evaluation Training (1) Workshops stressed the institutions and teams’ need to focus on new issues that have resulted from changes in federal regulations, namely: institution-set standards, correct use of distance education and correspondence definitions for purposes of federal financial aid, complaint processes and procedures, and clock to credit hour conversion. The workshops will be revised further this summer.

Commissioners who have not attended either a Team Training Workshop or a Self Evaluation Workshop are invited to attend one of the workshops listed below. Please let staff know if you plan to attend one of the training sessions.

Team and Self Evaluation Training Workshops – Spring 2013

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Training Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friday, September 6</td>
<td>Oakland Airport – Hilton Hotel</td>
<td>Team Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, September 13</td>
<td>Los Angeles Airport – Hilton Hotel</td>
<td>Team Training</td>
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<td>Friday, October 25</td>
<td>San Joaquin Delta College</td>
<td>Self Evaluation Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, November 8</td>
<td>Antelope Valley College</td>
<td>Self Evaluation Training</td>
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Regional Workshops

The Commission launched the second round of regional workshops this spring. The new topic, Institutional Internal Quality Assurance and Student Learning Outcomes Assessment follows the first round of regional workshops that focused on Capacity Building for Educational Excellence through Program Review and Integrated Planning. The new series featured presentations by ACCJC staff; Dr. David W. Marshall, Associate Director Tuning USA; and institutional presentations by representatives from Sacramento City College and Cuesta College. The first two regional workshops were hosted by Butte College (April 12) and Los Angeles Pierce College (April 19). The two workshops were attended by a total of 130 individuals from 27 institutions. Two regional workshops are planned for September 20 at Solano Community College and October 4 at College of the Desert.

Publications

The Team Evaluator Manual and the Manual for Institutional Self Evaluation were reviewed and edited in May mostly to reflect the recent changes in federal regulations. Remaining ACCJC manuals and guides will be reviewed this summer.

Special Projects

Accreditation Basics: As of May 10, 2013, 3,304 individuals have signed on to take the online course, and 2,546 individuals have completed the course. The course remains a requirement for all first-time evaluation team members, and continues to gather a great deal of interest from the field.

Assistance to Member Institutions

In keeping with the Commission’s purpose to promote continuous quality improvement, all staff worked, by phone or in-person, with institutional representatives who were seeking clarification on the preparation of Commission reports or assistance with understanding team recommendations. The time spent was valuable for the institutions and enabled staff to serve the membership without incurring travel costs or time-out-of-office.

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2013 Annual Financial Report (Fiscal Year 2011-12)

Summary Report

BACKGROUND

Member Colleges are required to submit an Annual Financial Report (AFR), including their Annual Audit, to the Commission. The AFR is the process used to monitor the fiscal condition of colleges in accord with federal requirements and to enable the Commission to identify colleges that are at potential financial risk. This report is a summary of the 2013 Annual Financial Reports based on self-reported data from the 2011-12 fiscal year submitted in March 2013.

A staff analysis is conducted annually of the AFRs to identify colleges at potential financial risk. Additionally, 2013 data was compared with data from the 2010, 2011, and 2012 AFRs to assess whether colleges’ financial condition had improved, deteriorated, or remained the same.

A common set of factors is used to identify levels of potential risk. Because significantly more data was reported for 2013, more factors have been used to rate colleges. The California Community College Chancellor’s Office Sound Fiscal Management Self-Assessment Checklist was used as the guide to identify these factors. Factors used identify colleges at risk in this analysis include:

- Deficit Spending – Actual amount and as a percentage of Revenue
- Three-year change in the Unrestricted Cash balance
- Significant audit concerns
- Federal Student Loan Default rates over 20% - data for three years
- Three year average contribution to OPEB as a percentage of the Annual Required Contribution (ARC)
- Salary and Benefits as a percentage of Total Unrestricted Expenditures
- Enrollment change (based on Full Time Equivalent students) – actual decline and a comparison between actual and budgeted enrollment levels
- Employee contract settlement in excess of COLA
- Substantial executive leadership changes (more than 2)
- Other financial information
Colleges in category M will be monitored in subsequent reporting years to assess whether financial conditions improve or deteriorate. Colleges identified as category R will be referred for more comprehensive analysis of their financial condition by the peer based Financial Reviewers in cooperation with the Ad Hoc Financial Task Force using the Commission approved process.

RESULTS

As a result of the analysis of the 2013 Annual Financial Report, Commission staff have identified colleges as category R – referred for analysis, and category M – continued monitoring. There has been an improvement in the overall fiscal status of colleges. Forty colleges were identified as challenged for the 2012 reporting year. For the 2013 reporting year, 28 colleges have been identified as challenged with 12 colleges identified as category R colleges, an improvement over the 14 so identified in the 2012 reporting year. Sixteen colleges have been identified as category M colleges, an improvement over the 26 colleges so identified in the 2012 report.

Significant summary data from the report that should be noted by the Commission include the following factors:

- The average difference between Revenues and Expenditures as a percentage of Revenue was 3.6%. Fifty-six colleges reported deficits but twenty-four colleges had deficits greater than 3% of revenues. The deficits reported by college increased over the three years reported which is consistent with the overall financial conditions experienced by colleges.
- The average change in the Unrestricted Cash Balance from FY 09-10 to FY 11-12 was a decrease of 28.72%.
- The average contribution to OPEB was 104.3% of the Annual Required Contribution (ARC). The three-year average contribution was 107.4%. However 27 colleges reported an average contribution of less than 50% during that period.
- The average ratio of Salaries and Benefits to total unrestricted expenditures was 84%. Forty-five colleges reported ratios in excess of 86% and 25 colleges reported ratios in excess of 90%. This represents a decrease over the three-year reporting period.
- The average Full Time Equivalent (FTES) Enrollment decrease was 8% in the Region. Sixty-nine colleges reported enrollment losses greater than 8% and nine colleges reported enrollment gains of more than 5%.
- The number of colleges with default rates in excess of 20% continues to increase. High default rates were reported by seven colleges for FY 09/10, Nine for FY 10/11 and eighteen for FY 11/12.