

Oregon Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) Project Executive Summary

The Oregon DQP was a three-year project supported by the Lumina Foundation. The primary purpose of the Project was to employ the DQP framework to engage Oregon's seventeen (17) public two-year and seven (7) four year institutions in purposeful discussions and reflections on the meaning and alignment of their degrees through three primary initiatives: 1) Engage institutions in substantive conversations about expected learning outcomes for their degrees; 2) Compare and align (where possible) learning expectations horizontally for peer degrees across Oregon institutions; and 3) Enhance the inter-institutional vertical integration of Oregon's two-year and four-year degrees to enhance student transition, progression, and completion in moving between community colleges and universities.

The Project substantially achieved the objectives for institutional engagement and to a lesser extent, the objectives for horizontal alignment and vertical integration. During the first year, twelve community colleges and six universities reported activities and progress on institutional engagement. During the second year, seven community colleges and five universities identified goals for institutional engagement on their year 2 work plans. A conference was held in the second year to address horizontal alignment across institutions. There was general agreement that the alignment of student learning outcomes could be improved across institutions and, although the AAOT has been successful, institutions working more closely together could improve it and make it even more useful for students. A smaller set of institutions engaged in discussion of vertical integration. Faculty at LBCC and OSU examined their general education writing outcomes and shared assessment rubrics and processes.

A number of issues beyond the scope of the Project tempered its success. Key among these was the significant change in the Oregon higher education governance structure. The corresponding shift in roles and responsibilities, coupled with uncertainty on how Oregon higher education would impact institutions, resulted in the loss of a number of key Project and institutional personnel. Another unanticipated complication was the overlap with similar initiatives. Oregon was already participating in a number of learning outcomes-based initiatives. With the introduction of the DQP framework as the last such project, differences in terminology and similarity of purposes of those projects created a sense of confusion and paralysis, rather than understanding and application. Given the compromising effect on the Projects objectives, a decision was made to terminate the Project was terminated at the end of the second year.

In spite of those obstacles the Oregon DQP project fulfilled its underlying intention of raising the conscientiousness of institutional colleagues on the importance and role of learning outcomes as the foundation for institutional practice. It stimulated thought, encouraged reflection, and engaged faculty, administrators, and students in meaningful conversations on the essential learning outcomes for associate and baccalaureate degrees offered by Oregon community colleges and universities. The most fertile ground for these discussions and for continued alignment of learning outcomes resides in the general education component of associate and baccalaureate degrees. While the "meta" level of the DQP outcomes may have appeared too abstract at the beginning of the project when some faculty were more focused on program and course level outcomes, the DQP served as an effective framework and catalyst to engage faculty in articulating and aligning expected student learning outcomes at the course, program, and degree levels. Once started, those conversations will continue.