Oregon DQP Project
Final Narrative Report
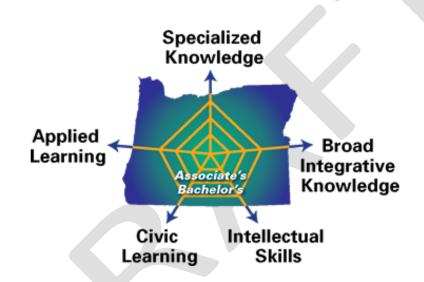
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Grant Information

Legal Name of Organization: Lane Community College

Common Name of Organization: Lane Community College

Lumina Foundation Issued Grant Number: 7978

Start Date: September 1, 2012

Original End Date: August 31, 2015

Actual End Date: August 31, 2014

Period Covered by this Report: September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2014

Introduction

This Final Oregon DQP Project Report is submitted as the result of a decision to terminate the project at the end of the second year of the three-year grant. This decision is based on a number of factors. Since the onset of the grant in 2012, the project experienced a significant loss of key leadership. Membership on the core team and several DQP institution leads changed during the first year of the project. Moreover, twelve of the twenty-four institutions experienced leadership changes that directly impacted the DQP project at their respective institutions.

Another important issue impacting the progress of the Oregon DQP Project is the work being done by Oregon institutions with other national initiatives focusing on identification, alignment, assessment, and or transportability of student learning outcomes. Consequently, after a promising start the Project experienced a loss of momentum in progressing toward achievement of some of its original objectives. With the introduction of the DQP framework as the last such initiative being explored in Oregon, differences of terminology and similarity of purposes of those projects created a sense of confusion and paralysis, rather than understanding and application. In light of these changes and challenges, it soon became clear that pursuing the objectives cited in the original Oregon DQP grant proposal was not possible.

Adding to the challenges that evolved, Oregon experienced major restructuring of the coordination and governance of higher education. The governor combined the oversight of universities, community colleges and financial aid under one coordinating council. Because this grant involves all public universities and community colleges in Oregon, it was supported by the Oregon University System Chancellor's Office and the Commissioner of the Department of Community Colleges and Workforce Development. These entities were impacted by the changes, calling the sustainability of the Oregon DQP into question.

Given all these changes and challenges, it was determined that continuing work on the Oregon DQP project under the prevailing circumstance would, at best, produce marginally diminishing returns on the investments of time, effort, and resources. To leverage, extend, and amplify the outcomes from the Project, a modification was proposed for the third year of the grant to anticipate the attendant issues associated with assessing and documenting student learning outcomes within the DQP or DQP-like curricular framework. Specifically, the proposal

submitted to the Lumina Foundation was to investigate the feasibility of credentialing and reporting student achievement at the learning outcome level, rather than at the course grade level. Following a series of discussions with the Lumina Foundation, it was determined that the timing was not right for this project. Reluctantly therefore, the decision was made to terminate the project one year prior to the expected completion date of August 31, 2015.

This report provides a summary of the accomplishments and challenges of the two year project. It also includes an overview of financial information.

Goals, Complications, and Accomplishments

The primary purpose of the Oregon DQP Project was to employ the DQP framework to engage seventeen (17) pubic two-year and seven (7) four year institutions throughout Oregon in purposeful discussions and reflections on the meaning and alignment of their degrees. Fulfillment of this purpose was to be advanced through active institutional participation in three Oregon DQP initiatives:

Goals
Institutional Engagement: Using the DQP framework, institutions were to create profiles of their current meta learning outcomes for their respective overarching degrees (AA, BS. etc.) and craft spider web diagrams that graphically represented discipline-specific degree outcomes (e.g., BA in History) or general education outcomes in relation to the meta outcomes of the degree qualifications profile.

Horizontal Alignment: Using the DQP as a guiding framework, community colleges and OUS institutions planned to work collaboratively to compare and (where possible) align common associate degrees (AA, AS, etc.) and common baccalaureate degrees (BA, BS, BAS, etc.) across institutions.

Vertical Integration: Using DQP meta outcomes as a guide, community colleges and OUS institutions attempted to articulate relationships between, and (where possible) improve the alignment of, expectations for associate degrees and expectations for baccalaureate degrees to enhance student transition, progress, and completion as students move between degrees.

Complications
As noted in the Introduction, this project experienced several challenges.
• Loss of key leadership for the project
• Change in institutional DQP leadership at 50% of the institutions
• Revamping of governance structure for higher education in Oregon
• Initiative fatigue from engagement in multiple overlapping projects similar in nature to the DQP

Accomplishments
Institutional Engagement: During year one, twelve community colleges and six universities reported activities and progress on institutional engagement. During year two, seven community

colleges and five universities included institutional engagement on their year 2 work plans. Some examples of the work:

- Used the DQP to gauge the appropriateness and viability of their institutions' current outcomes, their measurability, and how to improve assessment of their learning outcomes. The primary result was to affirm the existing learning outcomes while identifying areas for improvements in assessment processes and use of results.
- Shared research, best practices and publications on assessment of student learning outcomes and used the DQP to deepen organizational understanding of the value.
- Examined how the DQP learning outcomes align with the learning outcomes for the various degree programs, such as Communication, Economics, and Aquarium Science. In some cases this led to substantial rewriting of student learning outcome statements for the various degree programs offered.
- Mapped the institution's general education learning outcomes to the DQP. This sometimes included a particular focus such as Writing/Composition Outcomes and other times included the entirety of the institution's general education. This resulted in changes in the learning outcomes, most often to clarification and further articulation of the institution's commitment to civic learning.
- Mapped student affairs co-curricular learning activities and outcomes to the DQP to create a visual representation of how these learning opportunities contribute to the student achievement of learning outcomes. Although this has been frequently discussed amongst institutions, no map has been posted on the website to date.

The project has successfully met the expectations of institutional engagement as outlined in the original proposal. These accomplishments correspond to those efforts of other DQP projects across the country.

Horizontal Alignment: Horizontal Alignment was the primary topic addressed at the October 2013 conference. This conference focused on alignment of general education outcomes across community colleges and universities. Thirty-two people from ten community colleges and four universities attended. The conference resulted in general agreement that alignment of student learning outcomes could be improved amongst the 24 public universities and community colleges. Although the AAOT has been in place for many years, it could work better for students. However, the budget challenges, the reduction of the Oregon University System (OUS) office, and the multiple changes in higher education leadership all make it difficult to focus on this work at this time. Mapping our outcomes to the DQP is possible. However, we want to use a framework that actually helps us increase alignment and helps us develop meaningful and useful assessment, and although the DQP could help do this, the group agreed other tools may be more useful. This alignment work was not continued.

Vertical Integration: Two institutions moved forward with vertical integration discussions. Linn-Benton Community College (LBCC) and Oregon State University (OSU) faculty examined their general education writing outcomes and shared assessment rubrics and processes. As part of this work, faculty engaged in the development of discipline-appropriate rubrics for evaluation of general education outcomes. These conversations were a direct result of the DQP project in Oregon, but the DQP framework was not used as the focus of the conversation. Faculty seemed

eager to share and learn from each other when discussing the construction of assessment assignments and the rubrics used to determine a student's proficiency.

Reflections and Feedback

Processes
Based on the goals identified on institutions' work plans, there is a tendency to begin alignment conversations within general education. This seems to be fertile ground for the alignment of learning outcomes. However, some institutions struggled with engaging conversations about the "meta" level of the DQP outcomes. Some faculty are more focused on program and course level outcomes, and it can be a stretch for them to talk about the DQP outcomes except in very general terms. When faculty do engage in those conversations, the DQP framework helps them look at their learning outcomes and sum them up at the meta-level. It has started new conversations as faculty look across their curriculum.

Because the direct alignment between DQP and LEAP work was not readily clear to some faculty, some four-year institutions that have been fully engaged in LEAP initiative have been reticent about using DQP. It appears to be a repetition of the same conversation they had when beginning their LEAP work, and does not reveal deeper understanding, stronger assessment, or more useful measurement.

Feedback about mapping an institution's learning outcomes to the DQP is mixed. While some institutions found the spider mapping tool to be flexible enough to customize it to their work with learning outcomes at the course, program or degree levels, other institutions found the process to be redundant or limited in providing greater insight into student learning.

For some institutions, an unanticipated benefit of their engagement in the DQP/AAC&U LEAP process was the guidance these initiatives provided regarding proficiency-based learning outcomes. Such outcomes were incorporated in the design of the general education curriculum. However, it is important that the adoption of these revised outcomes by the faculty be one of natural alignment of shared goals rather than an external demand upon the faculty's academic self-governance.

It appears that timing matters for successful discussions of and influences from the DQP. In institutions that were engaged with early development of outcomes and assessment, plans for future improvements in teaching and learning have resulted. These include expanding faculty and student awareness of learning outcomes, strengthening faculty understanding of how teaching and assessment of outcomes are integrated within the courses they teach, and increasing student learning (deep thought) through emphasis on use of high impact practices.

Feedback on the DQP
Some institutions have found the language and the visual representation for the DQP to be linear in nature, and may not adequately reflect the learning process for students. Learning outcomes related to global awareness, sustainable living practices, and creative processes were missing in the first version of the DQP. The verbs used at the associate degree level aren't congruent with

the student learning that occurs within that degree in Oregon. Some of these limitations of the first version have been addressed in DQP 2.0. Institutions who have reviewed DQP 2.0 find it aligns better with their existing outcomes.

A positive outcome of faculty engagement with the DQP and with AAC&U's LEAP Initiative is the investment of new effort by faculty into substantiating the learning outcomes defined for students in their programs are actually the outcomes the faculty seek for their majors. While some debate does exist on what level of learning outcome is attained at the associate vs. baccalaureate level, such discussion is healthy in ensuring the baccalaureate degree paradigms for the various majors are appropriately designed. Further, for some institutions, the DQP proficiencies provided a solid base upon which to target assessment approaches that will yield valid, representative data on student learning.

Continuing the Work in Oregon

Although official work on the DQP in Oregon will be wrapped up by August 31, higher education leaders in the state are committed to continuing the work on clarifying and aligning learning outcomes for students in community colleges and universities. Historically, this work is coordinated through the Chief Academic Officers and Provosts of the 24 public universities and community colleges in Oregon, and these efforts will continue in the new governance structure. Some examples of continuing work:
- Continuation of the Multi State Collaborative work, which includes representation from both community colleges and universities
- Regular alignment discussions and continued work on the AAOT through the Joint Boards Articulation Commission
- Professional development opportunities bringing faculty together to share and discuss learning outcomes and assessment
- Budget request of the Higher Education Council to fund discipline-specific joint community college and university faculty meetings.

Community Colleges and Universities are committed to providing seamless higher education pathways to the students who move amongst their institutions.

Observations

The Oregon DQP project was very ambitious in its objectives in the application of the DQP framework through a collaboration of all Oregon public higher education institutions that operate largely independently with in a loosely coordinated network. While the diversity of institutions participating in the project provided some benefits in enabling a broad perspective of Oregon higher education, it also provided some challenges given the differences in institutional cultures, philosophies, and perspectives.

While the Oregon DQP project served as a positive and productive catalyst for introspection, reflection, and conversations on the expectations for student learning in courses, programs, and degrees it was difficult to focus institutional attention on the objectives of the Oregon DQP project, given the number of parallel or competing agendas with similar interests in identifying and aligning student learning outcomes (LEAP, WICHE Passport, Quality Collaboratives, etc.)

in which a number of project institutions were already engaged. Coupled with the uncertainty of Oregon governance changes there were some issues bigger than the DQP that the project was not able to overcome. However, some efforts, such as the Spidergraph visual representations of relationships of learning outcomes within courses and programs, did produce some positive, albeit limited, results.

There were also operational issues that affected the progress of the Oregon DQP project. Key among them was a loss of momentum. Oregon held conferences and engaged institutions in discussions on learning outcomes and the DQP a year or more prior to the start of the DQP grant. Unfortunately, the year's delay between those activities and approval of the proposal to Lumina resulted in a loss of momentum from the initial interest. The project began under the assumption that the groundwork had already been laid for institutional work, but it soon became clear that more time was needed to refresh the earlier conversations and build a foundation before launching into the project.

Another operational matter that achieved mixed results is the strategy used to connect institutions. The project employed a combination of virtual and face-to-face meetings. Monthly audio Information Forum meetings were held with all interested parties to disseminate project updates, engage in discussions, and seek feedback. These meetings were well received, effective, and productive. Video conferences were also held periodically to provide opportunities for deeper sharing and discussions. Face-to-face conferences were held to bring representatives from participating institutions together for even more focused work. The monthly audio Information Forum meetings and video conferences worked well, but do not substitute for face-to-face connections. Upon reflection, more opportunities for face-to-face meetings would have been more effective in sustaining the work of the project.

Notwithstanding its ambitious objectives, the Oregon DQP project appears to have achieved the same level of success as DQP projects with less ambitious objectives. Some progress was made at some institutions and little progress was made at others. Like other DQP projects, institutions that realized the most success were those already connected to the DQP framework or where the focus of the DQP projects aligned with current initiatives already under way. The more successful institutions also tended to be more willing to tolerate ambiguity in exploring more deeply the concepts of the DQP framework and where it would lead.

Web Repository of Project Artifacts

The Oregon DQP website (https://oregondqp.org) was created to serve as a dynamic repository for all project-related resources. The underlying technology enables screen views, images, videos, and menus to shrink gracefully from desktop monitor size fit the screens of mobile phones and other hand-held devices. Some website components are directly linked to an underlying database. PHP Data Objects (PDO) were employed to protect against hacking attempts and to ensure usability for the foreseeable future. Additionally, the website was designed to ensure accessibility for viewers with visual or other impairments.

The *Home* page provides site information, a brief introduction to the Oregon DQP Project, links to ongoing work, and the self-managed Oregon DQP listserv. The remainder of the website is

organized under five sections to provide comprehensive and transparent disclosure of all information related to the Oregon implementation of the DQP framework.

- *About*: General information about the DQP profile as well as information on the Oregon DQP Project.
- *Groups & Meetings:* Information about the leadership groups (Core Group, Information Group, IT Group, National Resource Committee, and Institutional Leads), meeting agendas, minutes, and related documents
- *Project Data* (Public Data, Work Plans, Activity Reports and Other Information): Project and institutional data as well as reports associated with the Oregon DQP Project
- *Project Management* (User Management, Project Data, and Spidergraph Management): Authorized user access to create and maintain secure institutional accounts to access the Oregon DQP database to report in-kind services and update institutional work plans
- *Conferences*: Information on current and past conferences

Although the project has been concluded, the information and materials on the Oregon DQP website will be preserved. In addition to aiding institutions that desire to continue the work within the DQP framework, these resources will remain available to interested parties around the world. The secure certificate and domain name (oregondqp.org) are valid through August 31, 2015. Consequently, the Oregon DQP Website will remain accessible via https://oregondqp.org/ until that date. The database will be disabled and, as of August 31, 2014, all information in the database and all Spidergraph applications will be converted to static pages and archived on Github (https://github.com/LaneCommunityCollege/dqp-spidergraphs) under the MIT license. Once the site is made static, interested parties will be directed to the Github site to access the Oregon DQP project archives.

Financial Overview

When originally approved, the amount of funding allocated by the Lumina Foundation for the three-year (September 1, 2012 through August 31, 2015) Oregon DQP Project was $789,000. On or about September 1, 2012, Lane Community College (the fiscal agent for the project) received $664,000 of that total. On or about June 1, 2013, an additional amount of $75,000 was transferred to Lane Community College, bringing the total received the Lumina Foundation for the first two years of the project to $739,000. Inasmuch as the proposed revision to the third year of the grant was not approved, the Oregon DQP project leadership decided to terminate the project at the end of the second year (August 31, 2014). Consequently, the scheduled June 1, 2014, transfer of $50,000 of Lumina Foundation funding for use during the third year of the project was not transacted.

Of the $739,000 received from Lumina, it is estimated that $393,216 was spent over the first two years of the grant in support of the Oregon DQP project. The estimated balance of $345,784 in grant funds received, but not spent on project activities, will be returned upon receipt of instructions from the Lumina Foundation. The final expenditure and reimbursement amounts will be provided in the financial report after the close of the grant.

In addition to the use of Lumina Foundation funds to support the Oregon DQP project, participating institutions committed to providing $510,000 of in-kind services over the three years of the grant. Through the first two years of the project institutions reported a total of $437,451 for in-kind services. It is worth noting that the amount of in-kind support contributed by participating institutions exceeded, by $zz,zzz, the amount of Lumina Foundation funding expended on the Oregon DQP project.

The Oregon DQP Final Budget Report is submitted under separate cover by Lane Community College, the fiscal agent for the grant.

Conclusion

The underlying, and arguably most important, intention of the Oregon DQP project was to stimulate thought, encourage reflection, and engage 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 expectation, expressed in the project's goals, was those discussions would lead to better horizontal alignment and vertical integration of student learning expectations to aid transfer and completion across institutions. Significant factors, beyond the scope and control of the project, inhibited the project in making greater progress in achieving its horizontal alignment and vertical integration objectives. Yet in spite of those obstacles and coupled with work done on similar initiatives 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. The work conducted over the past two years is not in vain. While there is work yet to do to bring the intended goals to fruition, the seeds that have been sown will continue to be cultivated as Oregon's higher education institutions work to advance student achievement and completion.