

Linn-Benton Community College

Degree Qualifications Profile Year 1 Work
Plan Progress Report

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Summary of Institutional Characteristics

Linn-Benton Community College is located in Albany, Oregon in the heart of the Willamette Valley. It serves about 22,000 students per year at our main campus and three branch campuses in Corvallis, Lebanon, and Sweet Home. We have about 6,500 credit students and nearly 500 faculty.

Our Mission: To engage in an education that allows all of our students to participate in, benefit from, and contribute to the cultural richness and economic vitality of our community.

Our Core Themes: Educational Attainment, Cultural Richness, and Economic Vitality

Student Demographics:

- 57% female
- 88% Caucasian
- 60% aged 18-25; 30% aged 26-45
- About 33% of our degree-seeking students are in career-technical programs

Facts Relevant to DQP

- We have a strong and ever-improving relationship with Oregon State University, which is located about 10 miles to the west of our main campus. About 70% of our students who successfully transfer go to OSU.
- We have a Degree Partnership Program with OSU that dually-enrolled 2,277 students last year.
- We are a Year 1 Achieving the Dream (AtD) school, and completed Foundations of Excellence (FoE) last year.

Statement of Year 1 DQP Work Plan Goals and Objectives

Institutional Alignment

- A) Assemble a team of faculty, staff, and administrators who are interested in student learning outcomes.
- B) Begin discussions on mapping current outcomes to the DQP in General Education courses, beginning with Arts & Letters.

Vertical Alignment with OSU

- C) Align the AAO and A degree learning objective with the OSU Baccalaureate Core Category Learning Outcomes for Math, Writing, and Speech.
- D) Develop preliminary outlines for assessment processes to facilitate sharing data on student learning inter-institutionally.

Progress to Date

a. Describe your progress toward achievement of your Year 1 DQP goals and objectives.

We have successfully formed our initial team: myself, Jonathan Paver (our Dean of Instruction), an th General Education Team (Dan Emerson [Communication faculty], James Reddan [Music faculty], Diana Wheat [Biology faculty], and Li Pearce [Education faculty]). We had planned to begin by mapping Arts & Letters general education outcomes as they currently exist to the DQP. At the same time, we are embarking on a project related to Achieving the Dream that involves re-examining whether the courses on our General Education list are truly “gen ed” in spirit. We have spent time on that, and have made progress, but have not yet done the mapping to the DQP.

In terms of our vertical alignment work with OSU, Bill Bogley and I met and did basic alignment between LBCC’s AAO and an A degree learning objective and the OSU Baccalaureate Core Category Learning Outcomes for Math, Writing, and Speech. Our outcomes are not as closely aligned in the three areas that we have started with (Writing, Math, and Communication), which we found to be interesting in itself, and reflect different philosophies on the role of these core areas. For example, the outcomes for Writing at OSU are much more focused on mastering the correct mechanics of writing. At LBCC, the focus is more on understanding audience, and communicating effectively.

We decided that the place to begin faculty-level discussions on what we found was in speech. Dan Emerson (faculty, LBCC) and Judy Bowker (OSU) have met to begin that work. Some things that are being discussed include using common assessment methods across institutions so that we can compare students’ outcomes.

b. Describe unanticipated opportunities and challenges, if any, you encountered in implementing your Year 1 DQP Work Plan.

The timing of Year 1 for the DQP coincided with several very disruptive events on campus. Our college had to make deep budget cuts during the late winter, and at the same time announced college reorganization. These events drew a lot of the attention and energy of both faculty and administrators, which made progress on the DQP difficult. Specifically, we had to take away the overload pay we had planned for faculty to work on outcomes assessment (and DQP). Partially in response to these events, the college recently approved a change in our AA degrees to reduce the required general education credits from 18 to 9, with the possibility that even those 9 credits can be embedded within existing classes. This has enormous implications for the DQP work (although we have not planned to begin with AA degrees).

At the same time, we have embarked on Year 1 of Achieving the Dream, which is a fairly intensive commitment. Thankfully, the DQP work is in alignment with one of the three projects chosen for our Achieving the Dream initiatives. This is a project to improve how we schedule classes to allow students access to the classes they need when they need them. In order to do that requires a very close look at how our curricula are structured and how we use prerequisites. These discussions are very closely related to the types of discussions we expect we will have with DQP, in terms of thinking about in which courses and at what point in each curriculum various skills and knowledge is built.

c. Describe insight and lessons learned in any from your work to date with the DQP.

The most exciting work related to the DQPs so far has been our vertical alignment work with OSU. Our curriculum offices/committees did not have a strong connection prior to the outset of this project, and now we are in regular communication with their office of assessment. We have identified several ways in which we hope to strengthen the alignment between our curricula (such as using common outcome assessment methods so that we can compare how well students are meeting these outcomes). A pleasant side effect of this has been the realization that, in some areas, our part-time faculty overlap significantly between institutions. Getting part-time faculty "on board" with outcomes assessment is always a challenge, especially in terms of incorporating targeted assignments or other assessment tied directly to outcomes into their classes. Part of the problem with that for part-time faculty is that they get asked to do this in different ways by the various institutions that employ them. If we can align our assessments (even if our outcomes are not perfectly aligned), we have a much better chance of compliance by our part-time faculty. We also have the opportunity to use common resources more effectively. Judy Bowker (OSU faculty), for example, was given a grant to help bring part-time faculty in communication better into the assessment process. By sharing notes and methods with our LBCC communications faculty, we have essentially benefited from the same grant.

d. Describe adjustments, if any made to current or future work plan resulting from those insights and lessons learned.

We are just now starting to figure out how the conversations between departments will unfold. We think that there are lots of efficiency gains that we could realize, since assessment efforts take a large fixed cost of coordinating and developing. However, we do not plan to force any plan of action on faculty at either school (even supposing that we could!). I think being able to share the efficiencies, interesting lack of alignment, and other insights that we've gained to date will help build enthusiasm for the alignment work coming up. In terms of institutional alignment to the DQP, we are too early in the process to have had many useful insights.

Reflections

- a. **What influence, if any, has your work with the DQP had on degree or program outcomes?**
- b. **What influence, if any, has your work with the DQP had on teaching and learning?**
- c. **What influence, if any, has your work with the DQP had on assessment of student achievement?**

It's probably best to answer these all together. So far, the DQP as a instrument has had very little influence on outcomes or assessment. However, the DQP as a *proces* of thinking about institutional, horizontal, and vertical alignment has been helpful. We have begun, as described above, a systematic review our transfer curricula at the same time that all AAS programs are deciding how to structure their programs in light of the changes to the general education requirements. So next fall will be a good time to be going with the DQP work. In terms of our vertical work with OSU, I anticipate that there will in fact be an influence on both program outcomes and assessment of student achievement, but we aren't there yet in Year 1.

- d. **What assistance would you like to receive to achieve of your Work Plan objectives?**

Time and money are, of course, our biggest constraints. The honorarium we received for participating in the DQ will be used to fund one 3-credit release for a single faculty member next year, plus some supplies for meetings to work on this. That is helpful, but it will not be enough to effect the scale of change that I believe Lumina is hoping for. In different budget times, we could subsidize the effort within our institution more, but that will not be possible for (probably) the duration of the project. However, the work that Lane has done on the spiderweb software is helpful.

- e. **What recommendations do you have to improve the DQP as a framework for practice?**

Nonetheless, we will know more when we are further along in the work.

Lumina Grant Deliverables

a. List degrees programs, or learning outcomes currently under review or planned for review as part of the DQP project.

The general education programs/learning outcomes for the Associate of Science and Associate of Arts, Oregon Transfer degrees are currently under review as part of the DQP project. Other transfer degree programs (in Music and Communication) will be under review this year.

b. Describe current or planned engagement of faculty in the DQP project.

There are currently five faculty engaged in the initial stages of this project. Two are very actively engaged, and the other three are learning about the DQP. We also have a newly-formed Curriculum Group that will be engaging with the DQP project in the coming years. This group has about 2 faculty from transfer programs within the college.

c. Describe the use, if any, of spider web maps in current or planned DQP work.

The spider web map concept is extremely useful. Our General Education team actually began using the DQP spiderweb concept for curricula in summer of 2012 prior to Oregon's receipt of the grant. However, we have begun by using the concept to map our programs in terms of our existing student learning outcomes. We hope to then map our outcomes to the DQP. This use of the mapping, while in some respects backwards, makes the project a little more salient to faculty, who otherwise tend to consider the DQP yet another layer of assessment work.

d. Describe current or planned involvement, if any, by student and advisory committees in the DQP work.

Because we are not working on AAS degrees at this time (for personnel, rather than philosophical, reasons), we do not plan on involving advisory committees. Student involvement is planned for coming years of the project, as a "reality check" of how the outcomes are actually perceived to be met in various courses throughout the program curricula.

Concluding Thoughts

A extremely difficult year has prevented us from making the progress that we'd hoped to, both with DQP and with our curriculum project. DQP has not been shared as widely with the faculty as intended, for the reason that it seemed politically inexpedient to announce another initiative when we were adding work and cutting faculty and staff. However, we have made a quiet but measurable beginning, and hope to go on in much the same way. I am not yet sure what the value of the DQP outcomes will be, but as a process and a way of thinking about how our institution fits with others in the state, it is especially important.