H. Quality Focus Essay

Through the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC) has identified two projects that address the following focus areas:

- Reframe the use of outcomes assessment to find value and meaning
- Strengthen the program review process and cycle for improved institutional effectiveness

The two projects will be implemented and monitored through shared governance processes and will include leadership and participation from all College constituencies.

Anticipated Impact on Student Learning and Achievement

Outcomes assessments are the foundation that assist institutions in improving their effectiveness by providing data on student learning and support services, thus allowing institutions to identify areas for improvement in their instructional practices and educational programs.

Through effective assessments of student learning outcomes, Mt. SAC will gather additional, specific information about how well students are mastering the knowledge, skills, and competencies that are essential to their program of study. This information will be used to identify targeted interventions to help students succeed.

The increased engagement of employees with the outcomes assessment process will support student knowledge and awareness of the impact of student learning outcomes.

Through implementation of this project, the College anticipates improved course retention and success. Ultimately, assessments of student learning outcomes are a tool for improved institutional effectiveness by providing actionable data that informs instructional practices, curriculum design, and institutional policies, practices, and procedures.

An effective program review process facilitates meaningful self-reflection that brings to light the areas of programs needing improvement and prompts programs to act upon these insights to develop a plan of improvement. By strengthening the integration of outcomes with the program review process, Mt. SAC will ensure that all programs can align curriculum, practices, policies, and structures with the newly adopted strategic plan and emerging educational facilities master plan. A revision of the existing program review process will positively impact student learning, experiences, and achievement.

Project One: Outcomes Assessment

Introduction and Rationale

Mt. San Antonio College has long held a reputation for quality and excellence in the programs and services it offers. As part of the work of continuous improvement and institutional effectiveness, the College would like to transition from a compliance model for outcomes assessment to a data-rich, integrated process that informs program review and articulates with the strategic planning process to improve student learning and achievement.

In the current process, there is wide variance in how outcomes assessment is implemented across the campus. For instance, some departments engage in meaningful conversations around Student Learning

Outcomes (SLOs), and multiple members of the department are responsible for leading various aspects of assessment and SLO reporting. Some departments may use course-level equity data to inform reviews of their SLOs and to make them more meaningful. Other departments view the accreditation process as the sole driver for the completion of outcomes assessment.

Despite the uneven practices surrounding outcomes assessment, steady progress toward improvement has been made. In the intervening years since the last accreditation cycle, the College has begun to shift the focus of outcomes assessment work by taking these steps:

- Increasing the number of faculty outcomes coordinators
- Training and deploying data coaches to help faculty with the interpretation of data and the meaningful use of results
- Creating a culture of data and normalizing the analysis of data in decision-making
- Utilizing Program Level Outcome (PLO) liaisons to assist faculty with SLO, PLO, and Institutional Level Outcomes (ILO) mapping
- Offering compensation for adjunct faculty participating in outcomes work
- Providing Association of College and University Educators (ACUE) training to five cohorts of approximately 30 faculty who received training in outcomes creation, measurement, and use
- Ensuring outcomes experts serve on the Planning for Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) Committee, the body that informs program review
- Incentivizing participation in the Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) program

Despite these supportive activities, the College acknowledges that one of the recurring themes of this accreditation process has involved the review and reflection of outcomes and assessment. The pandemic shifted focus to urgent matters and affected the efforts and energy spent on outcomes assessment, which led the College to apply for an Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) Partnership Resource Team (PRT) grant as a springboard for the institution's outcomes efforts. After an initial information gathering visit, the PRT team shared a Menu of Options (MOO) with the campus community based on their findings.

Combining the expertise of the PRT team with the ISER identified areas for improvement, the College plans to concentrate on these areas of focus:

- Reframe the use of outcomes assessment to find value and meaning
- Strengthen the interrelationship between outcomes assessment and curriculum

Project Action Plan

Goal 1: Reframe the use of outcomes assessment to find value and meaning
Measurable Outcomes • **Integrate meaningful outcomes assessment into the work of instruction and student service programs and units** • **Acknowledge and celebrate exceptional outcomes work** • **Engage students with outcomes assessment**

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources Needed	Timeline
Create learning opportunities for Outcomes leaders to develop and hone their skill set	Office of Instruction	Conference and Travel Funding	Beginning Fall 2024 -
Provide learning opportunities for faculty, staff, and administrators to develop a deeper understanding of outcomes as a gauge for student success and program improvement	Outcomes Committee Institutional Effectiveness Committee PIE Committee	Employee time Funding for professional development activities and events	Beginning Fall 2024
Identify and spotlight best practices and exceptional work in outcomes assessment with a focus on DEISA	Outcomes Committee	Employee time	Beginning Summer 2024
Create a robust dialogue on methods for infusing outcomes into teaching pedagogies to make SLO work meaningful using a DEISA lens	Outcomes Coordinators, Outcomes Committee	Funding for professional development activities and events	Beginning Fall 2024
Discuss student participation/ student government input on learning needs to establish new best practices in serving students	Outcomes Committee Associated Students	Employee time Partnership with Associated Students	Beginning Fall 2024
Review and reflect on progress around course, program, and institutional level outcomes	Outcomes Committee Units Divisions	Employee time	Beginning Fall 2024
Integrate assessment work across student services and instruction	Outcomes Committee Units Divisions	Employee time	Beginning Fall 2024

Goal 2: Strengthen the interrelationship between outcomes assessment and curriculum

Measurable Outcomes
- **Clarify the relationship between SLOs and course Measurable Objectives (MOs)**
- **Demonstrate a deeper understanding of the alignment among MOs, SLOs, PLOs, and ILOs**
- **Create time and space for outcomes work**
- **Identify and capture outcomes work in organic situations and settings**
- **Develop a flexible process that ensures regular outcomes assessment**

Activity	Responsible Party	Resources Needed	Timeline
Explore strong and effective models of outcomes assessment and curriculum integration	Curriculum & Instruction Outcomes committee Academic Senate	Employee time; conference and travel funding	Summer, Fall and Spring 2023-2024
Define and broadly communicate the interrelationship between MOs and SLOs as well as their alignment to PLOs where appropriate	Curriculum & Instruction Outcomes Committee	Employee time	Beginning Fall 2023
Create time and space to review outcomes *models* within divisions, programs, and departments	Departments Programs Divisions	Employee time	Beginning Fall 2023
Reflect on outcomes cycles and processes to ensure regular assessment of course, program, and institutional-level outcomes	Outcomes Committee Departments Programs Divisions	Employee time	Beginning Fall 2023
Investigate the timing of the assessment cycle to coordinate with Program Review and Course Outline of Records (COR) revisions so that work in one area leads to work in the next	Curriculum & Instruction Outcomes Committee Academic Senate	Employee time	Fall 2023 – Spring 2024
Investigate assessment cycles that are regular and	Outcomes Committee Curriculum and Instruction	Employee time	Fall 2023 – Spring 2024

systematic but allow for flexibility			
Explore tools that integrate outcomes into classroom assessment (i.e., Canvas)	Outcomes Committee Distance Learning Committee Information Technology Faculty Center for Learning and Technology	Employee time, Professional Development	Beginning Spring 2024
Build on existing coaching models (i.e., data coaches, PLO coordinators) to facilitate outcomes integration with program review	Outcomes Committee Office of Instruction	Funding for participating employees	Beginning Fall 2024

Project 2: Strengthen the Program Review Process

Introduction and Rationale

Planning for Institutional Effectiveness (PIE) is Mt. SAC's program review, the annual process of institutional assessment and analysis of both services and programs. PIE is both a reporting and planning tool, and it is intended to be a goal-setting process to assist programs and units in identifying highlights and gaps, documenting outcomes, and informing scheduling and resource allocation decisions. PIE is completed in Nuventive and, because of the complexity of the interface, the College spends considerable time and resources on developing training and self-help tools for users to access and use the interface. However, familiarity with the tool has not improved the quality of the input or analysis in PIE.

Furthermore, the PIE template is uniform, attempting to meet the needs of instructional departments, service areas, and administrative units. This leads to a wide variance in the types and depth of responses given to prompts that may or may not help PIE completers provide the relevant information and data on goals, progress made, and perceived gaps. For some areas, PIE is perceived as a tool to request resource allocations; thus, the value of the goal setting and integration with planning has been lost.

The PIE committee is very responsive to feedback from the campus community and has made efforts to improve the process, particularly the technology training for PIE completion. Over the past year, PIE committee members have engaged in strategic planning through collegewide conversations during SCUP training which led to deeper analysis regarding the need to more fully integrate outcomes, the strategic plan, and the campus facilities master planning process. This has led to further discussion as to whether the current program review tool is able to capture the necessary program review elements effectively.

Each year, a comprehensive program review is completed by every department, service area, and administrative unit, leaving little time for meaningful goal setting, planning, implementation, and assessment of the impact of changes made. In the current process, upon completion, the PIE becomes a

static annual report used primarily for allocation of resources if funds become available. The focus on resource allocation has obscured the true purpose of program review.

Restructuring of program review, outcomes assessment, and strategic planning processes is intended to result in more meaningful reflection and improved institutional effectiveness.

Goal 1: Strengthen the program review process			
Measurable Outcomes • Establish a clear nexus between outcomes assessment and authentic program review • Increase use of data in program review • Use data to drive student-focused program review goals • Implement a new program review cycle			
Activity	Responsible Party	Resources Needed	Timeline
Develop a shared understanding of the goals of outcomes and program review work	PIE Committee Outcomes Committee	Employee time	Fall 2023 – Spring 2024
Investigate 2- or 3-year program review cycles with shorter annual updates	PIE Committee Institutional Effectiveness Committee	Employee time	Fall 2023 – Spring 2024
Bring together PIE and Outcomes experts to provide guidance on the work	PIE Committee Outcomes Committee PRT peer experts	Employee time Funding for Professional Development	Fall 2023 – Spring 2024
Review and refine required PIE documents and templates	PIE Committee Research and Institutional Effectiveness	Employee time	Beginning Spring 2024
Program review and outcomes joint training	PIE Committee Outcomes Committee	Funding for professional development	Fall 2024
Build support resources and provide models of best practices for program review; create opportunities for dialogue and sharing best practices	PIE Committee Outcomes Committee PRT peer experts	Funding for participating employees	Beginning Spring 2024
Build on existing coaching models (i.e.: data coaches, PLO coordinators) to facilitate outcomes integration with program review	Data Coaches Data Coach Coordinator Outcomes Coordinators Campus Participants	Funding for employee engagement	Beginning Fall 2024
Leverage outcomes data to inform the program review (PIE) process	PIE Committee Outcomes Committee	Employee time	Spring 2025

Goal 2: Strengthen the integration of the program review process and the strategic planning process			
Measurable Outcomes • Connect program review to the College strategic priorities in a meaningful way • Assess progress on College strategic priorities through program review • Refine the communication at all levels of program review			
Activity	Responsible Party	Resources Needed	Timeline
Investigate a planning map of integrated processes and the ongoing cycle	Institutional Effectiveness Committee	Employee time	Beginning Fall 2023
Continued participation of campus leaders in strategic planning professional development (i.e., SCUP)	Office of Instruction	Funding for Conference and Travel	Fall 2023 – and ongoing
Establish cross-committee dialogue on the intersection of outcomes, curriculum, program review, strategic planning, and allocation of resources	Outcomes Committee Curriculum & Instruction Institutional Effectiveness Committee PIE Committee Budget Committee	Employee time	Beginning Spring 2024 - ongoing
Use backward planning to ensure deliverables synchronize appropriately	Institutional Effectiveness Committee	Employee time	Fall 2024 – Spring 2025
Transition to a new platform for program review	Planning for Institutional Effectiveness Committee	Upgraded software; Information Technology support	Beginning Fall 2023 - ongoing