Introduction to Assessment of Student Learning at New Mexico Junior College

The mission of New Mexico Junior College is to promote success through learning. Assessment of student learning is essential to ensuring we live up to our mission. This is a guide to NMJC’s updated assessment process implemented spring 2014. Processes described here are only intended to define basic steps of assessment of student learning, rather than attempt to dictate specifically how assessment of student learning will be carried out. Instructors will work together to create plans that move assessment from an obligation to a vital activity that drives teaching and learning.

Assessment of student learning should be viewed as a sequence of planning, sharing, and responding. Key components of NMJC’s assessment process include:

- Faculty members of each department agree to a set of student learning outcomes that apply across all courses within the department. At least one outcome should directly relate to an established institutional outcome. Instructors implement assessment practices that are aligned to their respective departments.
- Each department submits a report of assessment activities reflecting all courses within the department. Departmental assessment reports are reviewed by the corresponding dean, the vice president for instruction and the office of institutional effectiveness.
- Institutional assessment is a combination of applicable portions of departmental reports and standardized test results to document and track NMJC’s overall student success.
Assessment of Student Learning Summary

Naturally, the place to begin describing assessment of student learning is with students. They will experience assessment in courses they take because instructors will provide activities designed to measure learning with respect to a specific objective. For other participants, assessment takes multiple levels of implementation and analysis. In either case, success will be defined the same way- student learning! “Telling the story” of how that learning occurs is assessment of student learning.

The role of Instructors will be to design valuable, appropriate and engaging activities to prompt student learning. Instructors will collaborate with others in the department on assessment activities. Not all instructors will use the same methods, but all instructors will assess the same outcomes with the same expectations regarding student performance. Data resulting from student work on course activities must be fit for comparison to and combination with others in the department. In addition to data being combined and compared within the department, individual instructors will track student success within their classes to determine what course level changes are warranted. Instructors should maintain course assessment information to be submitted to a “department assessment coordinator”. Next, there should be meetings to discuss results. Sharing of insights and observations about assessment activities and data generated is the critical component of valuable, sustainable assessment which leads to improvements in courses and in turn improved student learning. If instructors engage in assessment practices and take advantage of the opportunity to collaborate with peers, they will see measurable improvement in student learning.

The above named department assessment coordinators will be individuals who assume the responsibility of writing assessment reports on behalf of the entire department. They will coordinate meetings for faculty to discuss assessment plans, results and action plans. The department assessment coordinator will be the “student learning storyteller” for the department. It will be his or her job to provide continuity in reporting across assessment cycles. A department assessment coordinator will gather data from all instructors for all outcomes and compile that data into a summary for the department. They will need to insure that at least one departmental outcome directly measures an institutional outcome and report on it in a way that provides sufficient detail for OIE to compare and combine with other departments on campus for the purpose of institutional assessment reporting. They should carefully record observations and discussion from departmental meetings and articulate action plans to be reported for the department as a whole. Other faculty members in the department then read the report to approve of statements and commitments. Department assessment coordinators will also post assessment reports to Canvas so that all faculty, full time and adjunct, may contribute feedback and approve reports before they are submitted to the corresponding dean. Finally, coordinators should communicate changes to all full time and adjunct instructors in preparation for the next assessment cycle.
Next, the role of **divisional deans** will be to assist the assessment process by offering support and feedback. Deans may help support assessment efforts by suggesting professional development ideas or by facilitating professional development opportunities based on faculty request. Deans should also help the department coordinator keep track of all participating instructors. If new full-time or adjunct instructors join the division, the dean should make sure they are in contact with the correct department coordinator for participating in assessment. After providing feedback to a department, deans will pass assessment reports to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Deans should also discuss assessment during in-service meetings to foster open communication and sharing of ideas about assessment.

Last, the role of the **Office of Institutional Effectiveness** and the **Vice President for Instruction** will be to review all departmental assessment reports for the purpose of summarizing and analyzing assessment of student learning for NMJC as a whole. OIE will combine portions of departmental assessment reports that specifically address NMJC’s institutional outcomes: Communication, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, and Self and Community. It will take data from all across campus to accurately portray student learning in these areas. In addition, OIE will oversee use of ETSPP each year to gather data from students nearing graduation to compare NMJC students to other students nationally. ETSPP is a test designed to measure critical thinking and communication in the context of content areas such as literature, humanities, science, history, and math. Next OIE will present institutional assessment results to deans and faculty during fall in-service or other times as needed. Finally, OIE will coordinate professional development opportunities based on results or requests.

Assessment of student learning should provide evidence of value in courses, programs of study and degrees earned. According to the assessment page of the NMJC website, institutional student learning outcomes are “the knowledge and abilities achieved by students graduating with an Associate Degree from New Mexico Junior College.” That description states “Students will achieve these outcomes as well as specific curriculum outcomes for their area of study.” This overarching statement of student learning captures NMJC’s assessment process by connecting specific areas of study to broader learning goals. Success through learning will be measured in how well graduates communicate, critically think and problem solve and interact within their communities as they pursue education and career goals beyond NMJC.
Overview of Assessment Process

1. **Develop learning outcomes.** Instructors in each department agree on 4-6 student learning outcomes that will be assessed in each course. At least one of the learning outcomes needs to directly measure an established NMJC institutional outcome—Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Communication, or Self and Community.

2. **Identify appropriate assessment methods.** Instructors may use different methods to assess agreed upon outcomes as long as each instructor assesses each outcome in each class.

3. **Set benchmarks.** Instructors agree to use common benchmarks within departments so results can be combined and summarized.

4. **Develop a plan and timeline.** Departmental assessment reports are submitted annually, but data should be gathered each semester and combined with other instructors’ data by semester or by academic year as arranged within the department.

5. **Implement the assessment plan.** Each instructor carries out assessment activities for each outcome in each class and maintains data to recognize when changes in courses may be necessary. The data and course changes should be shared with the department.

6. **Analyze the results.** Instructors share data with the department assessment coordinator who will compile and summarize results for the entire department. The department coordinator then arranges a meeting with all instructors to analyze the results.

7. **Based on the results, form an action plan.** The purpose of analyzing results as a department is to discuss changes needed to improve student learning. Instructors agree to implement changes.

8. **Document and communicate findings.** The department assessment coordinator will complete the assessment report according to analysis and conclusions from the departmental meeting. Instructors will review a final draft of the report in Canvas so they know and agree to what is submitted to the dean.

9. **Review feedback and form plan for new assessment cycle.** Once a departmental report is submitted to the dean, he or she offers feedback before passing the finished report to the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE). OIE conducts institutional assessment using departmental reports and test results.

10. **Start next assessment cycle by implementing changes according to action plan.**

**NOTE:** Assessment is not a task that gets completed. It is a constant process. Based on results, changes are made, but it is never finished.
As of spring 2014 NMJC defined the following departments for assessment reporting:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIVISION</th>
<th>DEPARTMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>• Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Area I of NMHED general education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Student Success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Area IV of NMHED general education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• English/Humanities/Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Area V on NMHED general education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business, Math and Sciences</td>
<td>• Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Computer Information Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Area II of NMHED general education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Natural Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Area III of NMHED general education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social/Behavioral Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Area IV and V of NMHED general education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical Education- Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical Education- Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical Education- Outdoor Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Safety and Career Technology</td>
<td>• Public Safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Criminal Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Career Technology Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ACTA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SLOAC approved departmental assessment report form can be found in the Assessment of Student Learning shell in Canvas.

**NOTE:** Divisional deans and department assessment coordinators should maintain up to date lists of courses within each department and instructors teaching those courses.
Institutional Student Learning Outcomes

Student learning outcomes are knowledge and abilities achieved by students graduating with an Associate Degree from NMJC. Students should achieve these outcomes as well as the specific curriculum outcomes for their area of study.

NMJC has adopted the following three institutional student learning outcomes:

**Communication**
The student is able to:
- Comprehend information to summarize, analyze, evaluate, and apply to a specific situation.
- Communicate in an accurate, correct, and understandable manner.

**Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**
The student is able to:
- Define a problem and arrive at a logical solution.
- Use appropriate technology and information systems to collect, analyze, and organize information.
- Apply critical thinking, analysis, and problem solving to data.

**Self and Community**
The student is able to:
- Analyze and reflect on the ethical dimensions of legal, social, and/or scientific issues.
- Communicate an awareness of a variety of perspectives of ethical issues.
- Interact with individuals and within groups with integrity and awareness of others’ opinions, feelings, and values.

Rubrics and guidance for each institutional outcome can be found in the Assessment of Student Learning shell in Canvas.
GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT

State-Mandated Competencies

In addition to NMJC’s assessment process as stated above, the New Mexico Higher Education Department has established competencies in five general education areas. For assessment purposes, instructors must assess all state-mandated competencies within their area(s). NMJC departments may adopt general education area competencies as departmental outcomes. (General education assessment report forms can be found in the Assessment of Student Learning shell in Canvas) The competencies for each area of general education are as follows:

Area I: Communications Competencies
- Analyze and evaluate oral and written communication in terms of situation, audience, purpose, aesthetics, and diverse points of view.
- Express a primary purpose in a compelling statement and order supporting points logically and convincingly
- Use effective rhetorical strategies to persuade, inform, and engage.
- Employ writing and/or speaking processes such as planning, collaborating, organizing, composing, revising, and editing to create presentations using correct diction, syntax, grammar, and mechanics.
- Integrate research correctly and ethically from credible sources to support the primary purpose of a communication.
- Engage in reasoned civic discourse while recognizing the distinctions among opinions, facts, and inferences.

Area II: College Algebra Competencies
- Construct and analyze graphs and/or data sets.
- Use and solve various kinds of equations.
- Understand and write mathematical explanations using appropriate definitions and symbols.
- Demonstrate problem solving skills within the context of mathematical applications.

Area II: Liberal Arts Math Competencies
- Construct and analyze graphs and/or data sets.
- Use and solve various kinds of equations.
- Understand and write mathematical explanations using appropriate definitions and symbols.
- Demonstrate problem solving skills within the context of mathematical applications.

Area II: Statistics Competencies
- Display, analyze, and interpret data
- Demonstrate knowledge of problem-solving strategies
- Construct valid mathematical explanations
- Display an understanding of the development of mathematics
- Demonstrate an appreciation for the extent, application, and beauty of mathematics
**Area III: Laboratory Science Competencies**
- Describe the process of scientific inquiry.
- Solve problems scientifically.
- Communicate scientific information.
- Apply quantitative analysis to scientific problems.
- Apply scientific thinking to real world problems.

**Area IV: Social and Behavioral Science Competencies**
- Identify, describe, and explain human behaviors and how they are influenced by social structures, institutions, and processes within the contexts of complex and diverse communities.
- Articulate how beliefs, assumptions, and values are influenced by factors such as politics, geography, economics, culture, biology, history, and social institutions.
- Describe ongoing reciprocal interactions among self, society, and the environment.
- Apply the knowledge base of the social and behavioral sciences to identify, describe, explain, and critically evaluate relevant issues, ethical dilemmas, and arguments.

**Area V: Humanities and Fine Arts Competencies**
- Analyze and critically interpret significant primary texts and/or works of art (this includes fine art, literature, music, theatre, & film).
- Compare art forms, modes of thought and expression, and processes across a range of historical periods and/or structures (such as political, geographic, economic, social, cultural, religious, and intellectual).
- Recognize and articulate the diversity of human experience across a range of historical periods and/or cultural perspectives.
- Draw on historical and/or cultural perspectives to evaluate any or all of the following: contemporary problems/issues, contemporary modes of expression, and contemporary thought.
Over the past six years NMJC has published the following reports:

Annual Reports of Student Learning (internal)
- Annual Report of Student Learning- fall 2008 through Spring 2009
- Annual Report of Student Learning- Fall 2009 through Spring 2010
- Annual Report of Student Learning- Fall 2010 through Spring 2011
- Annual Report of Student Learning- Fall 2011 through Spring 2012

Annual Reports with NM Higher Education Department for General Education Courses:
- General Education Assessment Report for 2008
- General Education Assessment Report for 2009
- General Education Assessment Report for 2010
- General Education Assessment Report for 2011
- General Education Assessment Report for 2012
- General Education Assessment Report for 2013

Each of these reports can be viewed on NMJC’s Assessment of Student Learning website.