

Learning Evidence Plan For Transformative Assessment

Valencia Community College

2005



Developed by:

Learning Evidence Team

Andrew Alexander
Linda Anthon
Nick Bekas
Kira Bishop
Philip Bishop
Michael Bosley
Helen Clarke
Judi Delisle
Aida Diaz
Jackie DiMartino
Tim Grogan
Emily Hooker

William Johnson
Maryke Lee
Patrick Nellis
Melissa Pedone
Louise Pitts
Ann Puyana
Barbara Shell
Allison Sloan
Cheryl Robinson
Shawn Robinson
David Rogers
Roberta Vandermast

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Charge to the Learning Evidence Team:

- *Foster a culture of evidence at the college...*
- *Articulate a philosophy of assessment of student learning...*
- *Envision a long-term plan...that will bring coordination to the program of learning and development at the College.*

Background and Context.....	3
Transformative Assessment	3
Principles and Purposes of Assessment	5
Levels of Transformative Assessment.....	6
Valencia's Assessment Pyramid	7
Alignment: Plan for Transformative Assessment and the Strategic Learning Plan.....	8
Communication Plan for LET	8
Implementation: A Phased-In Approach	9
LET Implementation Plan for Transformative Assessment	10
Appendices	
A: Sources Consulted	
B: Vision Paper: Think Project	
C: Process for Creating, Adopting and Revising Course Outlines/Course Outline Builder	
D: Printout: Glossary Definitions of Assessment	
E: Printout: Concept Map of Assessment	

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Culture of Assessment:

"A culture of evidence is characterized by institutional practice that promotes competence in the skilled, intentional gathering and use of information... (it) reflects the value of using evidence for making decisions and for formulating and solving problems, in a spirit of ongoing reflection and continuous improvement based on data....it provides incentives...to work together to add value to the assessment process at the institution."

-- Brown, Ehrmann and Suter, "Transformation and Assessment: A Conceptual Framework"

The Learning Evidence Team (LET) was established in February 2004 to provide leadership for the college-wide initiative to accomplish Goal 4 of the Strategic Learning Plan and to foster a culture of evidence that improves learning at Valencia. The LET was challenged to answer two key questions: What do we mean by evidence of student learning? And, how will we document this evidence? This plan is a result of work by the Learning Evidence Team with input from the College Planning Council, Faculty Association, Instructional Affairs Council, and Executive Council. Preparation included reading and studying scholarly sources, working with consultants, attending the AAHE Conference on Assessment, as well as identifying and prioritizing the work that needs to be done to answer these questions. The origin and evolution of the work of the LET is available at <http://www.valenciacc.edu/learningevidence>.

The intent of this Learning Evidence Plan is to outline processes and timeframes agreed to by the College community that result in evidence of student development in cognitive, affective, and psycho-motor abilities as well as evidence of the quality of students' experiences that contribute to learning. Knowing actual results and understanding the processes that produce them will permit effective decision-making and improve the quality of student learning.

Since evidence of student learning and development depends on relevant and valid assessments, it is important to understand the meaning and uses of the term assessment. As a starting point for our work on assessment, definitions of assessment were written and are now a part of a Glossary available online at <http://valenciacc.edu/learning/evidence/glossary>.

TRANSFORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

What Is Transformative Assessment?

"Assessment is a means for focusing our collective attention, examining our assumptions, and creating a shared culture dedicated to continuously improving the quality of higher learning."

- Thomas A. Angelo,
[AAHE Bulletin](#), Apr '95

As a starting point for our work on assessment, definitions of assessment were written and are now a part of a Glossary available online at <http://valenciacc.edu/learning/evidence/glossary>. A concept map of assessment was also assembled in order to generate the "big picture" of assessment. This concept map is available at <http://valenciacc.edu/lrcwest/inspiration/assessmentatvalencialet.htm>. As a result of this work, the LET has realized that the type of consistent, systematic, interdisciplinary assessment proposed by the College is described in the literature of assessment as "transformative assessment." Transformative assessment is

"Transformational change is, by definition, relatively large-scale and rapid. It therefore poses unusual dangers for busting budgets and burning out staff. Therefore 'cost' studies (which, in higher education focus on how staff members use their time) are important to help reduce the danger that, as the effort grows in scale, it creates unexpected cost overruns or alienates staff by forcing them to attempt too much with too little."

-- Brown, Ehrmann and Suter, "Transformation and Assessment: A Conceptual Framework"

imbedded in an operational culture of evidence that informs decision-making and change at all levels, seeking to consistently improve the quality of education as measured by standards that are seen as meaningful and lasting. While transformative assessment seeks to place change within the larger frameworks of community and professions, it acknowledges that it is best directed internally, from within individuals and within the institution.

However, transformative assessment will NOT be successful, unless it is realistic, sustainable, integrated, conversational and done on a relatively large scale.

1. Transformative assessment must be realistic in that it must deal directly with the concerns of both students and educators. It must address and directly improve the quality of educational experiences, both curricular and extracurricular. Change must be visible, measurable, and take place within a relatively short period of time.
2. Transformative assessment must be sustainable. Meaningful assessment must be integrated into the decision-making processes, so that at all levels transformative assessment is a process of learning and renewal – not an add-on to an already complete job description. It must be supported with adequate budget and staff. Institutions which engage in transformative assessment must be willing to redirect budgets to reflect the importance of transformative assessment.
3. Transformative assessment must be integrated. It must cut through programs, disciplines, and levels so that broad measures of competence can be determined and effectiveness of methods can be measured regularly and systematically throughout the institution.
4. Transformative assessment must be conversational. It must be a process for on-going dialog and consensus about the core values, mission, methods and effectiveness of an institution. This conversation is one that never ends and one in which all parties must be honest, open-minded, and courageous.
5. Transformative assessment must be done on a relatively large scale in order to effect lasting change. It involves scanning the total educational environment for evidence of competence and effectiveness. Unless supported and practiced at all levels, it is no more than an educational fad – something practiced and then forgotten.

PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES OF ASSESSMENT

AAHE Nine Purposes of Assessment:

1. The assessment of learning begins with educational values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it reflects an understanding of learning as multidimensional, integrated, and revealed in performance over time.
3. **Assessment works best when the programs it seeks to improve have clear, explicitly stated purposes.**
4. **Assessment requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes.**
5. **Assessment works best when it is ongoing not episodic.**
6. **Assessment fosters wider improvement when representatives from across the educational community are involved.**
7. **Assessment makes a difference when it begins with issues of use and illuminates questions that people really care about.**
8. **Assessment is likely to lead to improvement when it is part of a larger set of conditions that promote change.**
9. **Through assessment, educators meet responsibilities to students and to the public.**

Principles of Assessment:

1. Assessment of learning at Valencia Community College reflects our mission, vision, and values.
2. Assessment is most effective when it is based on learning that is integrated and multifaceted. For this reason, assessments should address learning at all levels and reveal change over time.
3. The focus of assessment at Valencia Community College is not limited to courses, but also includes a wide range of experiences that influence student learning.
4. Assessment should be based on clear, explicit outcomes that are widely published.
5. Assessment should be grounded in the standards of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.
6. Assessment works best when it is ongoing rather than episodic.
7. Assessment is most effective when it is collaborative, involving students, administrators, staff, faculty, and community members in shared responsibilities.
8. Assessment results should be communicated openly, honestly, and publicly in order to cultivate trust among all stakeholders.
9. Assessment of specific learning outcomes should illuminate student progress toward the Core Competencies, utilize varied modes, and attend to experiences that lead up to learning outcomes.
10. Assessment of the Core Competencies--Think, Value, Communicate, and Act-- is central to Valencia's Assessment Plan.
11. Assessment should play a central role in decision making at Valencia by providing valuable information for improving learning and stimulating discussion in order to enhance the quality of education at Valencia.

Purposes of Assessment

- The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning
- By completing the feedback loop, assessment of student learning promotes competence in college personnel and processes.
- Comprehensive assessment supports renewal of the curriculum so that learning happens as we intend.
- Assessment provides useful, well-grounded information to stimulate discussion and support goal-setting and sound decision-making.
- Assessment enables accountability to students and other stakeholders.
- The effective use of assessment findings empowers meaningful change.
- Assessment provides opportunities to celebrate success.

The Purpose of Assessment Is NOT:

- To evaluate individual faculty members
- To regulate individual course implementation or pedagogy
- To prescribe assessment processes

LEVELS OF ASSESSMENT

Multiple Levels of Assessment

"What if the origin of the commitment to assessing student learning were to come from within the institution? What if the origin of that commitment were to come from faculty members themselves, based on their intellectual curiosity about how students learn ...?"

**- Peggy Maki in "Moving from Paperwork to Pedagogy" May 2002
AAHE Bulletin**

Learning is a developmental, cumulative process; therefore, curricula are additive and cumulative building progressively upon prior understanding and knowledge. Assessment of learning will encompass all aspects of the educational experience.

The Valencia assessment model reflects the four primary levels of Valencia's curriculum: classroom learning experiences, course level, program/department/or discipline level, and general education/TVCA. Institutional effectiveness is included in the fourth level and reflects the quality of the whole--the learning outcomes that result from the sum of experiences that take place at all four levels. While assessment of each level is important, a thoughtful plan will be incremental, cumulative, and dynamic. It is the goal of the Learning Evidence Plan to gather meaningful data at the student, course, program and institutional levels in order to improve the quality of learning at the college. Each level lends itself to different assessment questions. Thus, The Learning Evidence Plan is multi-faceted.

At the student or classroom level: Are learning outcomes clearly described for students? What opportunities are provided for students to learn and to demonstrate learning outcomes? How is feedback regarding performance communicated to students?

At the course level: Does the course contribute to growth in TVCA? What evidence is available to document student learning related to the core competencies and learning outcomes, shared or common assessments, portfolio assignments, or pre-post assessments?

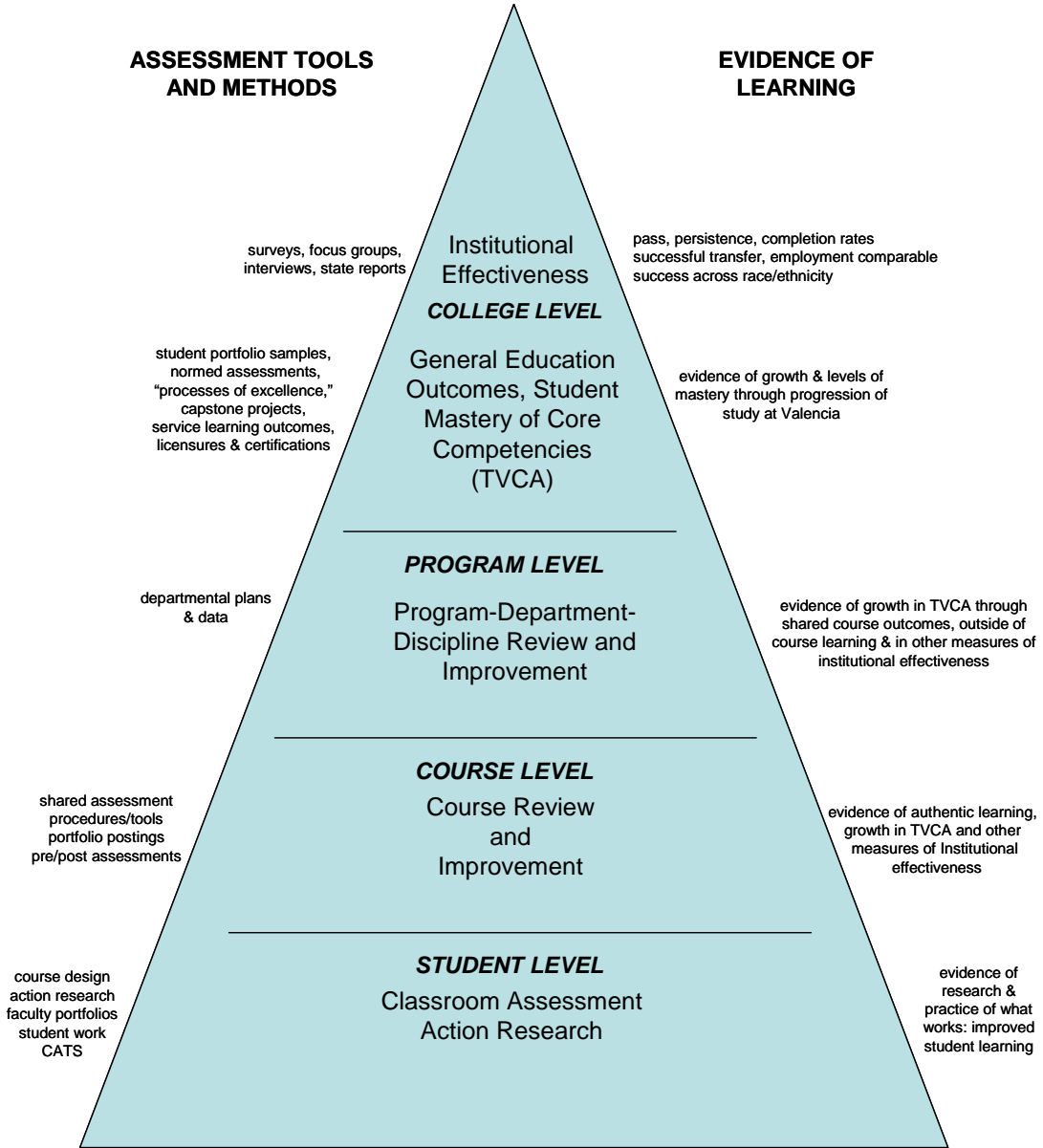
Program or discipline level—Are learning outcomes articulated clearly for the program? Are course outcomes sequenced developmentally and are learning activities producing the desired outcomes? In what ways are students providing evidence that they have achieved program learning outcomes?

General Education or College Level---Does the general education curriculum deliberately and consistently incorporate TVCA into all courses and the co-curriculum by attending to relevant teaching, learning, and assessment activities? What methods are provided for students to demonstrate that they have achieved an appropriate level of ability in TVCA?

Institutional Effectiveness—To what degrees are students achieving their goals at Valencia?

VALENCIA'S ASSESSMENT PYRAMID:

Assessment of Student Outcomes at Valencia



ALIGNMENT: PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATIVE ASSESSMENT AND THE STRATEGIC LEARNING PLAN

This plan for transformative assessment has been developed with the goals of the Strategic Learning Plan in mind. Specifically, this plan is designed to support Strategic Learning Goals 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5. The Learning Evidence Team has willingly shared responsibility for these areas of the SLP with others in the College community.

Strategic Learning Goal 4.1 states that the College will "implement a multi-year strategy to incorporate the core competencies throughout the college curriculum, teaching and assessment." When the LET Plan for Transformative Assessment is completed it will initiate a continuous cycle of that will measure student mastery of core competencies in the curricular and co-curricular learning experiences offered at the College.

Strategic Learning Goal 4.2 states that the college will "develop a plan to identify and align learning outcomes and assessment procedures, beginning with the College's foundation courses." The LET Plan for Transformative Assessment recognizes this and suggests that the College begin its assessment with these foundation courses, also identified as "front-door" courses and as courses targeted for the College's Achieving the Dream Initiative.

Strategic Learning Goal 4.3 states that the College will "continue to promote and support classroom assessment models through professional development and curriculum design." The LET Plan for Transformative Assessment recognizes the vital role that assessment plays in effective curriculum design and supports the implementation of this goal.

Strategic Learning Goal 4.5 states that the College will "implement a multi-year strategy of course review." This work has been accomplished by the LET in the development of the Course Outline Builder and the approval of a process for the development of course outlines. This tool, combined with this process, will implement a regular cycle of course review at the College.

COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR THE LET

The Importance of Communication:

1. The LET will maintain effective communication with the college community including transmitting of LET

Key Stakeholders

- Students
- Faculty
- Instructional and support staff
- Administration
- Advisory groups
- Graduates
- External Constituents

activities/decisions and the requesting of feedback and input from faculty, administration, and professional staff at regular intervals.

2. Individuals who serve on the LET will verbally, (informally), communicate the progress of the LET to peers and should represent the decisions of the LET, (speak with “one voice”).
3. All formal communication related to LET issues and decisions will go out in writing.
4. Decisions made by the LET will be broadly communicated to the college.
5. All *official* decisions will be communicated by the Co-chairs of the LET to the designated group(s).
6. All communication will clearly identify the purpose, any rationale necessary to explain the purpose, and will clearly delineate what the reader is expected to do (e.g., follow-up requested).

Tools for Communication Delivery:

- Person-to-person
- Email
- Telephone/Voice-mail
- Memorandum
- The *Bulletin*
- Posting on the college website (Internet)
- Posting on the college portal – Atlas (Intranet)
- Forums
- Focus groups
- News release

Communication Protocols:

Before a communication is issued, the following questions will be asked and answered:

1. What is the purpose of the communication?
 - Is it to give information or to receive information/input or both?
 - A call to action
2. Who will be responsible for the communication?
 - Is it a co-chair, a member of the LET, or an individual who is not an LET member?
3. Who should receive the communication?
 - Potential Internal Recipients:
 Faculty at large
 Faculty Association and Senates
 Instructional Affairs Committee (IAC)
 Learning Leadership Team (LLT)
 Vice Presidents
 Provosts
 College-wide Curriculum Committee
 College Learning Council (CLC)
 Professional Staff Forum

Career Staff Council
 President
 District Board of Trustees
 Students
 College at large

- Potential External Recipients:
 Partners (Donors, Granting Agencies, Accrediting Agencies, Federal Government, Local non-profit, K-12, other colleges, consultants)
 Media via Valencia's Marketing, and Media Relations
 Professional organizations
4. Questions to ask before communicating:
- What is most effective method for communication?
 - Is feedback from the message being requested?
 - If yes, is it clear what feedback is requested and to whom the feedback should be sent? By what date/time?
 Through what communication tool?
 - What is the follow-up responsibility of sender to the LET

IMPLEMENTATION: A PHASED-IN APPROACH

"One key element of an effective change process is *alignment in planning and in decision-making*....Such alignment is not accomplished through rigid, formal, static planning projects carried out in five year cycles, but through an ongoing process of environmental scanning, review, community dialog, and adaptation."

-- Brown, Ehrmann and Suter, "Transformation and Assessment: A Conceptual Framework"

Rationale:

Implementation of a comprehensive assessment plan for the College is a mammoth undertaking. Our consultants have advised us that the wisest approach is to build a process that will begin small and end big. The following outline of an implementation plan for comprehensive assessment at Valencia outlines a phased-in approach. It is a "living document" intended as a series of guideposts that will require monitoring and revising as our understanding of transformative assessment grows and changes. It is designed to initiate a cycle of continuous assessment and renewal that will transform the learning environment at the college so that assessment is integral to all we do.

LET IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR TRANSFORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

To be revisited and adjusted at the end of each calendar year

2005 (See last page for LET Action Plan for 2005)

Level	Goal/Project	Key Indicators
Institutional Effectiveness	<i>To be completed with input from CLC, FA, IAC, CPC</i>	<i>To be completed with input from CLC, FA, IAC, CPC</i>
College	Initiate THINK project	THINK Rubric, evidence of student learning as measured by this rubric and other appropriate indicators
Program	Emphasize Prep and Front Door Courses	Results of departmental assessment plans
Course	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Approved course outlines
Student	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Evidence of student learning

2006

Level	Goal/Project	Key Indicators
Institutional Effectiveness	<i>To be completed with input from CLC, FA, IAC, CPC</i>	<i>To be completed with input from CLC, FA, IAC, CPC</i>
College	Revise and continue THINK assessments Initiate COMMUNICATE project	COMMUNICATE rubric, evidence of student learning as measured by this rubric and other appropriate indicators.
Program	Emphasize Prep and Front Door Courses	Results of departmental/program assessment plans
Course	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Approved course outlines
Student	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Evidence of student learning

2007

Level	Goal/Project	Key Indicators
Institutional Effectiveness	<i>To be completed with input from CLC, FA, IAC, CPC</i>	<i>To be completed with input from CLC, FA, IAC, CPC</i>
College	Initiate VALUE project; revise and continue THINK assessment; revise and continue COMMUNICATE assessment	VALUE Rubric, evidence of student learning as measured by this rubric and other appropriate indicators
Program	Focus on 1000 level courses	Results of departmental/program/discipline assessment plans
Course	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2) Complete/update course Outlines for all 1000 level courses	Approved course outlines
Student	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Evidence of student learning

2008

Level	Goal/Project	Key Indicators
Institutional Effectiveness	Measure THINK college wide in all disciplines at all levels	Varied evidence of student learning
College	Initiate ACT project; revise and continue THINK assessment; revise and continue COMMUNICATE assessment; revise and continue VALUE assessment	Rubric, evidence of student learning TVCA
Program	Focus on 2000 level courses	Results of departmental/program/discipline assessment plans
Course	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2) Complete/update course outlines for all 2000 level courses	Approved course outlines
Student	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Evidence of student learning

2009

Level	Goal/Project	Key Indicators
Institutional Effectiveness	Measure COMMUNICATE college wide in all courses at all levels	Varied evidence of student learned
College	Initiate comprehensive, interdisciplinary THINK project	evidence of student learning TVCA
Program	All disciplines, all levels	Results of departmental/program/discipline assessment plans
Course	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Approved course outlines
Student	Align learning outcomes and assessment procedures (4.2)	Evidence of student learning

2005 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
Action Items Identified by LET

Objective	Action	Responsibility	Timelines
Maintain a current inventory of assessment practices (see: http://valenciacc.edu/ircwest/LET/programmatic_assessment_inventory.cfm)	Query Deans and Program Directors	LET, Deans, Program Directors	Summer Term, 2005
	Update Inventory	LET	
Communicate LET activities to college community	news brief to <i>Bulletin</i>	LET Chairs	Monthly
	regular updates to website	LET Chairs	Ongoing Process
THINK Assessment Project (will require its own plan and timeline)	Design and initiate project	THINK Project Director (TBA) THINK Management Team (TBA) LET	January – December <i>See separate plan and timeline for THINK Project</i>
Update course outlines	Identify targeted courses	Deans, Faculty work groups, Faculty Development, LET	January-December Ongoing Process
	Approval of outlines	Faculty in respective disciplines, deans, CC	
	Approved outlines secure in database	OIT, Acad. Affairs	
Support Incorporation of TVCA throughout the college		Faculty, deans, LET, departments	Ongoing Process
Provide feedback to college community	LET Annual report	LET	January 2006

APPENDIX A: SOURCES CONSULTED

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EXPERTS CONSULTED 2003-2004

Susan Hatfield, Winona State University

Peggy Maki, Consultant to Higher Education

Gloria M. Rogers, Rose Hulman University

Patti Derbyshire, Mount Royal College