John Carroll University's Assessment Academy Project

The Story So Far

Following the IAC Hearing in early spring 2015, the Provost directed Dr. Robert Todd Bruce, the Director of Assessment, to prepare an application for John Carroll University to join the Higher Learning Commission's Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning, a four-year program offered by the Commission's Quality Division to help improve assessment of student learning at member institutions.

Dr. Bruce met with the Academic Assessment Advisory Committee to discuss the content of the proposal and the make-up of the five person leadership team. Once the application had been composed and then vetted by the AAAC and a number of administrators including the Provost, it was submitted. While waiting for word on acceptance, Dr. Bruce solicited faculty volunteers to fill the four other slots in the Academy Leadership Team. Working in conjunction with the administrators, he selected Brendan Foreman (Math), Maria Marsill (History), Yi Shang (Education), and Tina Facca-Miess (Marketing) to make up the Team.

The five members of the Leadership Team attended the Academy Roundtable in June and outlined the plan for the next four years. During the 2014-2015 academic year, Mark McCarthy (Student Affairs) joined the Leadership team to help emphasize the institutional scope of the project.

Central Question

To what extent do John Carroll University students meet the expectations described in the University Learning Goals?

Intended Outcome

The Academy Action Team will design and implement an institutional assessment system, focused on the new University Learning Goals, which brings together existing assessment efforts (the new Integrative Core Curriculum, student affairs, program-level and course level student learning assessment in academic programs, and academic program review) to determine whether students are meeting the University Learning Goals.

Action Steps

Organized Thematically (with Responsible Parties)

The first step was to expand the Leadership team into an Academy Action Team through strategic recruiting and volunteers. The Action team membership is designed to be flexible and need-oriented with various subgroups working on smaller projects and reporting back to the larger group. Throughout the process the Action Team will exercise oversight of subgroup tasks and routinely evaluate the progress of the work. Once established the Action team will meet at least twice a semester.

Create the Academy Action Team (Fall 2015)   Leadership Team + Admin

An important ongoing process is communication. The Academy Leadership team began the process by informing University leadership, faculty, staff, and students of the nature of the Academy project and recruiting members for the Action team. Throughout the course of the project, the Action team will report out regularly on the progress of the project to all stakeholders.

Communication (Fall 2015)   Leadership Team/Action Team

The central process of the Academy project will follow the normal assessment of student learning cycle. First, the Action team will determine where the University Learning Goals are already being assessed, and, simultaneously, clarify and shape institution-specific definitions for the important terms in the learning goals. Then the Office of Academic Assessment will gather and synthesize existing data about student learning related to University Learning Goals from academic majors, minors, and concentrations; academic and student support programs; co- and extra-curricular programs; institutional surveys/instruments; and the Integrative Core Curriculum. A specially-tasked subgroup of the Action team will then determine how best to analyze the data and create initial strategic recommendations to improve student learning. These initial recommendations will be revised and validated by the entire Action Team before being passed along to the University Leadership Group for decision-making.

1. Survey/Inventory/Map Existing Assessments (2015-2016)   Action Team
2. Create Operational Definitions for Goals (2015-2016)   Action Team
3. Gather and Synthesize Existing Data (Fall 2016 +)   OAA
4A. Data Analysis and Initial Strategic Recommendations (Fall 2017 +) "Analysis" Subgroup
4B. Final Strategic Recommendations   Action Team
5. Deliver to University Leadership Group for decision-making (Fall 2017 +)   OAA
6. University Leadership Group makes decisions (Spring 2018 +)   ULG

The Academy Leadership team already foresees that existing assessments may fall short. A subgroup of Action team members will be tasked with identifying gaps in the existing system (asking the question *are there goals not being measured or not being measured adequately?*), working with the relevant stakeholders to develop and deploy new assessment instruments to feed data back into the central process described above.

A. Fill Gaps   The "Gap" Subgroup
   A.1   Identify Gaps in Existing System (Fall 2016)
   A.2   Develop Gap Instruments (Spring 2017)
   A.3   Deploy Gap Instruments (Fall 2017)

Another potential problem comes in the lack of a well-designed pre-/post-assessment tool. Another subgroup of Action team members will be tasked with the development, deployment, and validation of a pre-assessment tool, possibly to be used during New Student Orientation. They will also collaborate with faculty and/or student affairs to determine the best venue for using the tool a second time near the end of a student's time at the institution.

B. Pre-/Post-Assessment   "Pre-/Post-" Subgroup
   B1.   Pre-Assessment Instrument (Orientation?)
           B1.0   Explore Options (Spring 2016)
           B1.1   Development (Fall 2016)
           B1.2   Deploy (Fall 2017)
           B1.3   Validate (Spring 2018)
   B2.   Post-Assessment Instrument
           B2.1   Generate Options (Spring 2016)
           B2.2   Collaboration (Fall 2016 – Fall 2017)
           B2.3   Finalize (Spring 2018)
           B2.4   Deploy (Fall 2018)

There are on-going conversations about adopting an institution-wide ePortfolio tool. The Action team will remain a part of this conversation and if one is selected, will explore its use as part of the institutional assessment process.

C. ePortfolio [if institution decides to adopt]

Near the end of the Academy project, another subgroup of the Action team will be tasked with defining and recording the necessary systems, policies, and procedures to ensure the long-term success of the institutional assessment system. The final task of the project will be to formally hand over responsibility for the continuation of the system to the Institutional Assessment Committee

Systems (Spring 2018) (define, record, and launch)   "Systems" Subgroup

Transfer Academy Action Team responsibilities to Institutional Assessment Committees (Spring 2018)

Organized Chronologically

	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	Spring 2017
Acad. Leadership	Create the Action Team Communication	Communication	Communication	Communication
Action	1. Survey/Inventory/Map Existing Assessments 2. Create Operational Definitions for Goals		Sub-Group Oversight	
"Gap"			A1. Identify Gaps in Existing System	
"Pre-/Post-"		B1.0 Pre-Assessment: Explore Options B2.1 Post-Assessment: Generate Options	B2.2 Post-Assessment: Collaboration	B1.1 Pre-Assessment: Development B2.2 Post-Assessment: Collaboration
OAA			3. Gather and Synthesize Existing Data	

	Fall 2017	Spring 2018	Fall 2018	Spring 2019
Leadership	Communication	Communication	Communication	Communication Transfer to Assessment Committees
Action	Subgroup Oversight 4B. Final Strategic Recommendations			
"Gap"	A2. Develop Instruments	A3. Deploy Instruments		
"Pre-/Post-"	B1.2 Pre-Assessment: Deploy B2.2 Post-Assessment: Collaboration	B1.3 Pre-Assessment: Validate B2.3 Post-Assessment: Finalize	B2.4 Post-Assessment: Deploy	
"Analysis"	4A. Data Analysis and Initial Strategic Recommendations			
"Systems"		Define, Record, and Launch Systems		
OAA	3. Gather and Synthesize Existing Data 5. Deliver Findings to University Leadership Group for decision-making			
Univ. Leadership		6. Decision-Making		