

Project Details

Title	Assessing General Education in Early Colleges	Status	ACTIVE
Category 1 - Helping Students Learn		Updated	
Timeline		Reviewed	
Planned Project Kickoff		Created	11-18-2014
09-30-2014			
Target Completion		Last Modified	11-19-2014
06-30-2016			

- **1: Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve :**

VU's Answer: Criterion Four of the Higher Learning Commission Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components requires VU to demonstrate “its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.” The goal of this Action Project is to build a systematic process for conducting assessment of early college and eventually all dual credit courses. The project will begin with the assessment of critical thinking; the objective for the early college sites will be to match or exceed the on-campus expectation of 60% of the students achieving an “adequate” level in all dimensions of the critical thinking rubric.

- **2: Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and for how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio:**

VU's Answer: This Action Project is timely because it will help VU:

- establish compliance with the Higher Learning Commission's Criterion Four,
 - provide evidence that early college faculty are maintaining rigor in courses taught off campus,
 - provide assessment data to the Indiana Commission of Higher Education related to courses on the Statewide General Education Core List, and
 - document that University Core Curriculum dual-credit courses taught in the early college classroom have equivalency to on-campus courses.
- **3: List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress for each goal. Be sure to include formal evaluations when the project progress will be reviewed:**

VU's Answer: This Action Project is a two year project divided into a Professional Development Phase and an Implementation Phases.

Professional Development Phase:

- September 2014 - Early College Assessment Workshop I

Facilitated by the VU Interim Director of Institutional Effectiveness, the early college faculty will be introduced to and hopefully gain an understanding of the VU's general education outcomes, with special focus on the critical thinking outcome and core assignment that is used in all VU general education courses taught on the Vincennes and Jasper campuses and it's Indianapolis locations. Included in this discussion will be an introduction to the VU critical thinking rubric that is used to score student artifacts. The early college faculty will also meet with lead department faculty from VU to discuss discipline-specific critical thinking assignments.

A survey will be distributed shortly after the workshop; it will gauge early college understanding of VU's critical thinking goals and expectations for students.

- Spring 2014 - Early College Assessment Workshop II

Early college faculty will participate in a critical thinking norming workshop that will include a discussion of critical thinking assignments that work and those that don't.

Two measures will be used to evaluate the success of Workshop II and the Professional Development Phase:

- (1) Another survey will be distributed to gauge early college faculty understanding of the critical thinking assignment and expectations for students
- (2) Early college faculty assignments will be reviewed by a VU faculty review committee.

Phase I will be successful if the survey data reveals the early college faculty understand the critical thinking goal, assignment expectations, and application of the rubric, and if all faculty assignments are approved for the assessment project.

VU will complete a project update after this professional development phase is completed and will report the assessment results at that time.

Implementation Phase

- December 2015 and April 2016

Early college faculty will execute the critical thinking assessment assignment in the high school classroom during the fall and/or spring semester.

- Summer 2016

Early college faculty will join VU faculty to participate in the assessment of student critical thinking artifacts and the evaluation of the assessment data. The data discussion will include comparative data for on-campus and early college students, and establish strategies for improvement related to expectation of 60% of the students achieving an “adequate” level in all dimensions of the evaluation rubric.

The success of this project will be measured by

(1) direct evidence that early college students are succeeding on a par with VU's traditional students

(2) a final survey of both early college and VU's full-time faculty about their perception of the process, the assessment results, and the learning improvement needs and plans.

VU will close the project in the summer of 2016 and will report Implementation Phase results at that time.

- **4: Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project’s duration:**

VU’s Answer: This project involves a great number of the learning community. In fact, one core goal of the project is to get early college and VU's full-time faculty working together in a number of settings. At least 20 early college and 12 Vincennes full-time program faculty will participate in the discussions and activities; the Interim Dean of Early College Faculty and the Interim Director of Institutional Effectiveness are coordinating the activity, along with numerous early college administrators.

The individuals identified will collaborate throughout the project. While the first workshop will occur at the early college Ben Davis in Indianapolis, a plan is being formulated to bring early college to VU's campus for the norming session in the spring or summer of 2015 and for the assessment activity in the spring of 2016. A bonus of the project is better integration of the faculty from both locations.

- **5: Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when:**

VU’s Answer: Progress on this Action Project will be evaluated as follows:

- Assessment Workshop I: An anonymous survey will be given at the end of the workshop to determine where early college faculty are confused about the critical thinking assignment expectations and the assessment process.

- Assessment Workshop II: An anonymous survey will be used to determine comfort with the assignment expectations, and the critical thinking assignments developed by the early college faculty will be evaluated for effectiveness by on-campus assessment leaders. The goal for the latter project will be to have all of them approved.
- Implementation: All early college faculty teaching a general education dual credit course will 1) administer the assessment assignment to students in the high school classroom, 2) participate in assessment evaluation activities, 3) generate strategies for improvement based on both the high school and comparative assessment data, and 4) early college and VU full-time faculty will complete a survey about the process and understanding of expectations.

The Action Project will be a success if by the end of the 2015-16 academic year, 1) early college faculty have gained a working knowledge of the VU critical thinking assessment process exemplified by the collection and analysis of student artifacts taken from the high school classroom, 2) VU has built a systematic process for conducting assessment of early college dual credit courses, and 3) the early college sites have developed strategies aimed at either matching or exceeding the on-campus expectation of 60% of the students achieving an “adequate” level in all dimensions of the evaluation rubric.

- **6: Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project’s goals:**

VU’s Answer: The following challenges might need to be addressed:

- Full participation in all of the workshops and activities by all essential early college and VU full-time faculty. Scheduling and willingness to meet at distant locations (whether it's VU full-time faculty going to Indianapolis or early college faculty traveling to Vincennes) can be a problem.
- Changing faculty both at VU and at the early college locations (but especially the latter). As faculty come and go, new training will have to occur. VU needs to create plans for including new people in this process, whether that means a regular set of meetings or some sort of training videos and assignment library to help new faculty connect to the process.

- **7: Provide any additional information that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project:**

VU’s Answer: This project is a pilot intended create a quality assurance model for all VU's locations. The assessment process will rely on common rubrics and general assignment descriptions, allowing some room for faculty to tailor assignments to suit their needs. By using the approach, VU can support faculty autonomy while producing reasonably reliable data from one course to another based on the common rubric that is being used. VU is insisting on the same standards at all locations.

One other note about the standard of success for critical thinking: VU is employing a rubric designed to be used in lower and upper division courses, including the capstone in baccalaureate degrees. The standard of success, the 60% of VU's students will achieve "adequate" on all dimensions of the rubric is a higher standard than it might appear. VU's rubric is based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric, and VU's initial pilot assessment resulted in only 24% of students able to achieve "adequate" in all five dimensions of the rubric. Many students had success in some dimensions, but might have been low in one or more dimensions. VU has five success levels and "adequate" is the middle success level or 3rd level of five. VU does not expect students in the lower division courses to achieve at a capstone (highest) level on any dimensions.