Highland Community College
Notice Report

February 2019

President: Tim Hood
tim.hood@highland.edu

Accreditation Liaison Officer: Chris Kuberski
chris.kuberski@highland.edu

Higher Learning Commission

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

February 15, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

Enclosed is Highland Community College's Notice Report, which summarizes detailed responses and related actions to concerns expressed in the HLC Action Letter dated November 14, 2017. These concerns were generated from the most recent Comprehensive Quality Review (CQR) at Highland Community College (HCC). I am pleased to report that we have addressed the noted concerns and now wish to present documentation and summaries of the significant progress that has occurred as a result.

The campus community at HCC has fully embraced the values of and become significantly more engaged in working together to develop a broader understanding of assessment of student learning outcomes and utilizing data to make better informed strategic decisions. Key achievements resulting from our strengthened commitments include creating a systematic, comprehensive assessment cycle that includes all five general education institutional outcomes. Greatly improved data collection and analysis processes for the assessment of student learning outcomes are now being utilized within each program offered at Highland. These processes are faculty-driven, as faculty Assessment Mentors have been instituted. These individuals are well trained, have been well received by their peers, and are exemplary in teaching and assessment of learning competencies.

Also since the CQR review, Highland faculty and staff have worked diligently together to strengthen systematic processes for gathering and utilizing data for decision-making as related to ongoing improvement. Critical areas of our work now being continuously and systematically improved through these processes include assessment of student learning outcomes, retention, completion, and persistence efforts. These new and strengthened processes are more inclusive, comprehensive, and now more institutionalized. Numerous examples of both inclusive strategic planning and progressive outcomes resulting from related actions toward continuous improvement are outlined in this Notice Report.

Perhaps most importantly, the College community has strengthened our culture by seriously and methodically approaching challenges and opportunities for improvement with higher levels of shared vision and commitment toward sustaining excellence. The pace of our work together has been extraordinarily brisk, while added values of the same work are undeniable.

Thank you and all who serve as part of this process. We look forward to welcoming the HLC Peer Review Team in April, and should there be any further information which may be useful, please feel free to contact me accordingly.

Respectfully,

Tim Hood
President

NOTICE REPORT

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

February 2019

OPENING STATEMENTS

Highland Community College (HCC) located in northwest Illinois is a small, rural community college that strives to provide a rich, high quality, yet affordable college experience for the residents of Illinois Community College District #519. In Fiscal Year 2018, Highland served approximately 3,581students. Of these, 2,321 were enrolled in transfer-related programs, 356 in career/technical degree programs, 323 in certificate programs and vocational courses, 503 in personal development courses, and 78 in High School Equivalency (HSE) and/or ESL courses. Highland's enrollment has followed the declining state and national trends resulting in a -4.3% FTE change and a -3.8% headcount change from 10th day Fall 2017 to 10th day Fall 2018. At 10th day Fall 2018, the student population was made up of 61% Females, 38% Males, and 1% Unknown. The ethnicity of credit generating students is predominately White/Non-Hispanic (82%). Approximately 10.1% of the student population is Black/Non-Hispanic while 2.3% are Hispanic. Highland continues to serve a fairly traditional student population with 64.5% of students between the ages of 17 and 24. However, 16.9% are between the ages of 25 and 39, and 11.2% are 40 years of age or older. During Fall 2018, Highland employed 46 full-time Faculty, 69 part-time faculty, 93 full-time staff and 43 part-time staff. In an effort to effectively serve IL District #519, HCC offers programs leading to the Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of General Studies, Associate of Engineering Science, and Associate of Applied Science as well as various workforce-related certificates. Highland actively participates in the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) and has partnered with several four-year institutions to offer transfer, 2 + 2 and 3 + 1 Articulation Agreements. Additionally, Highland promotes learning opportunities for high school students through Dual Credit and the early college program CollegeNOW. Recently, Highland in partnership with Rock Valley College was awarded a $675,000 grant to launch Linking Talent with Opportunity, a regional effort to create pathways for high school students that directly link to high-demand local jobs.

Even though Highland has been successful at offering high quality programs at a reasonable cost, historically the institution has struggled to create a systematic process for assessing student learning and for utilizing data to inform improvements. Although Highland recognized its shortcomings and had made significant strides in these two areas, the efforts were not fully realized and entrenched in the culture at the time of Highland's most recent Comprehensive Quality Review (CQR) visit. Since these processes were not fully embedded in the Highland culture at the time, it was determined that Highland was at risk of non-compliance in these areas. Recognizing the seriousness of the Notice sanction, Highland took immediate action. The pace of implementation to remedy the issues was shifted into high gear. Highland has been diligent in its efforts to demonstrate compliance with the Criteria for Accreditation and the Core Components. Furthermore, Highland has systemized its processes to ensure that the assessment of student learning, the utilization of data for ongoing improvement, and retention, completion, and persistence efforts are embedded in the culture of the institution. While Highland's immediate concern is to demonstrate that the institution is no longer at risk of non-

compliance, Highland is also committed to ensuring these efforts are sustainable and engrained in the fiber of the College.

The response that is being presented here includes representative samples of evidence that demonstrate Highland's adherence to the Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components 3.A, 4.B, 4.C, and 5.D that were found to be at risk for non-compliance. Throughout this document, the evidence required by the HLC Board of Trustees to demonstrate that Highland Community College is no longer at risk of non-compliance is provided in gray boxes. Following that is Highland's response and supporting evidence to demonstrate that Highland has ameliorated the issues that led to the Notice sanction.

Criterion 3- Met with Concerns

Core Component 3.A

The College meets Criterion Three, Core Component 3.A, "the institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education," but with concerns because not all programs have completed written outcomes, although this issue was brought to the attention of the College by previous HLC groups. There are plans to continue this process through this academic year.

Evidence Required:

> *Development and implementation of clear program outcomes for all programs. Outcomes should be posted in the Academic Catalog, on the website, and clearly articulated in all syllabi;*

The work to develop and assess student learning outcomes that was referred to in the HLC Action Letter began in the Fall of 2016 when HLC Senior Scholar, Dr. Susan Hatfield, presented an assessment workshop to the Highland faculty at the Fall 2016 Opening Days In-service. The goal of this workshop was to address the concerns pointed out in the HLC 2014 Systems Appraisal Feedback Report that "the college falls short of describing how assessment of student learning occurs at the course, program, and institutional levels." Central to Dr. Hatfield's presentation entitled, "Assessing Program Outcomes," was the development of course and program learning outcomes for both general education and academic programs. Dr. Hatfield asked faculty to consider the most important things that students should know or do before they graduate (Appendix A. Hatfield Highland Program Assessment Presentation, slides 47-51, 60-70, 75-83). It was stressed that program learning outcomes should be learner centered, specific, measurable and follow a consistent format.

Program Learning Outcomes

Format for learning outcomes:

Students will be able to

<<action verb>> <<something>>

Hatfield, Slide 29

2

It should be noted that at the time of Dr. Hatfield's presentation, neither course level nor program level assessment had been systematically implemented across campus. Believing that program level assessment builds upon course level assessment, the assessment effort following Dr. Hatfield's presentation focused on course level assessment. Faculty began submitting documented assessment plans which identify benchmarks, assessment methods, assessment findings, and curriculum improvements based upon the findings. The systematic collection of course level assessment plans each fall and spring semester documents the process, promotes curriculum improvements, and fosters the sharing of best practices across the institution (Appendix B. Blank Assessment Plan Form). At the time of the HLC CQR visit in Spring 2017, course level assessment had become a systematic process that continues to be completed each fall and spring semester. It was deemed satisfactory at the time of the visit and was not identified as an area of concern in the CQR report or Notice findings.

While course level assessment was the first action item successfully addressed following Dr. Hatfield's presentation, program level assessment was the primary action item for the Fall 2017 Opening Days In-service held in August 2017 (Appendix C. Agenda- Assessment Workshop Fall 2017). Faculty received preparation tasks prior to the In-service, so they were prepared to refine program outcomes during the work time provided.

7/22/17
Memo
From: Chris Kuberski
To: HCC Faculty

_____

I hope this finds you enjoying the summer. July marks the mid-point redirecting our focus to the start of the Fall 2017 semester. In preparation for Opening Days, I wanted to provide information regarding the plans especially as they relate to faculty. The faculty focus for Opening Days will be the continuation of our work on the Assessment of Student Learning, particularly at the program level.

All faculty will be expected to participate in the Thursday afternoon assessment workshop as we continue to address our OOs (Outstanding Opportunities).

In preparation for the workshop, all faculty should review the assessment form that they completed in January. At this point, the assessment data should have been collected for Spring 2017. The purpose of the workshop will be to analyze the data, compare the results to the benchmark, summarize the findings, and identify strategies to improve student learning. Essentially, you will be completing the remaining portion of the assessment form. You will also be creating a new plan for Fall 2017 and reviewing your completed form from Fall 2016 as a reminder of the improvements you have already made and/or plan to make this semester.

On the day of the workshop (Thursday, August 10), please bring the following items with you:
- **Copy of your assessment form from Spring 2017**
- **Compiled data from Spring 2017**
- **Evaluation tool used to assess student work**
- **Documented outcomes for your programs**

You may find it best to bring a laptop or tablet so that you can access these documents electronically as needed. These documents will be utilized throughout the work time. The laptop cart will also be available.

For those faculty who opted to review and revise learner outcomes, these should be completed so that assessment can begin this semester. The assessment form is attached for new faculty. To begin this process, please bring copies of your Fall syllabi and the documented outcomes for your program/course. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Building upon the systematic process established for course level assessment, the information that Dr. Hatfield provided regarding program outcomes was revisited. Faculty were instructed to develop five to seven Program Outcomes that were measurable, distinctive, and learner centered. Faculty Work Sessions were also provided during the month of September so that faculty could receive one on one feedback regarding the program outcomes. Program Outcomes were collected in September 2017. Once reviewed by the Executive Vice President (EVP) and the appropriate division dean, they were either approved or sent back to the faculty member for revision. Program Outcomes were reviewed again in January 2018 as part of the curriculum mapping effort which is explained further in section 4.B of this report. Once finalized, they were posted on the Highland website in the Academics/Academic Programs section by program https://highland.edu/academics/. All Associate of Applied Science programs and Associate of Science degree programs have posted their learner outcomes on the Highland Community College website in this manner. The Associate of Arts degree areas (i.e., Humanities, Social Science, Fine Arts) have tied their programs directly to the five General Education Institutional Outcomes of Written Communication, Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy, Critical Thinking, and Information Literacy. These, too, have been posted on the website.

To ensure that students are aware of program expectations, faculty began including program outcomes on their course syllabi in Spring 2018 (Appendix D1-D10. Sample Syllabi). This is now an expected, continued practice. Furthermore, when new courses are submitted to the Curriculum & Instruction Committee (C&I) for consideration, they, too, are expected to include program outcomes. In addition to the program outcomes being posted on the website and being clearly articulated in all syllabi, they will also appear on the individual program pages in the 2019-2021 Highland Catalog (HCC 2019-2021 Catalog), which is currently in production.

Highland has developed, implemented, and posted the program outcomes in the 2019-2021 Highland Academic Catalog, on the website, and articulated them in all syllabi as required. Moving beyond the development and posting of program outcomes, the assessment of program outcomes has become a systematic process, which in many ways mirrors the course level assessment process. This process is explained fully in the Criterion 4 section of this report. Not only have programs completed written outcomes, they are assessing the outcomes annually to ensure the institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education. Thus, Highland believes that the evidence provided here demonstrates HCC's adherence to Core Component 3.A and should alleviate the concern that Highland is at risk of non-compliance for this criterion.

Criterion 4- Met with Concerns

Core Component 4.B

The College meets Criterion Four, Core Component 4.B, "the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning," but with concerns because, while the College provided salient information regarding measures taken to advance its assessment program, it has not implemented a comprehensive, faculty-driven process to systematically assess student learning and use the results to improve student outcomes, although the issue was brought to the attention of the College by previous HLC groups.

Evidence Required:

> *Development and implementation of systematic, regular assessment plans for all outcomes within general education. Data collection should show attention to all groups inclusive of the general education courses, including dual credit and programs in all degrees;*

HCC has identified five Institutional Outcomes that reflect the general education expectations required for an Associate degree. These five Institutional Outcomes are Written Communication, Oral Communication, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Literacy, and Information Literacy. At the time of the CQR visit, the assessment of Written Communication and Oral Communication was occurring annually; however, the assessment of the other three Institutional Outcomes had not yet begun. This situation has been remedied and all five of the Institutional Outcomes were assessed as of Spring 2018, and data is currently being collected to complete the subsequent assessment cycle in Spring 2019.

Prior to receiving the HLC Action Letter regarding HLC's concerns that Highland was at risk for non-compliance, the Accreditation Committee (Appendix E. Accreditation Committee Members) recognized that the institution's progress with assessment and the faculty involvement in the process was insufficient. In keeping with the Strategic Plan Goal #6, "Continuously assist with faculty and staff professional development in order to maintain high performance learning environments and services contributing to a caring and supportive campus climate which encourages student engagement," in Spring 2016, the Accreditation Committee began taking steps to remedy this situation by developing a professional development plan designed to increase understanding of accreditation expectations, assessment, and use of data to inform decision making (Appendix F. Professional Development Activities). As part of this plan, the College invited Dr. Susan Hatfield, HLC Senior Scholar, to present an assessment workshop during the Fall 2016 Opening Days In-service, as explained in the Core Component 3.A section of this report. Although progress was made regarding course level assessment, dissatisfaction with the progress on assessment of the general education Institutional Outcomes and the involvement of faculty in the process remained. The Accreditation Committee discussed this at length at its meeting in October 2017 and agreed that it was time to restructure the committee in an effort to increase faculty involvement. It was determined that a General Education (Gen. Ed.) Assessment Committee should be formed as a subgroup of the Accreditation Committee. Shortly thereafter, a call for faculty volunteers to serve on the Gen. Ed. Assessment Committee was sent to all faculty. Since faculty were already participating in the assessment of Oral and Written Communication, faculty were asked to identify which of the remaining three Institutional Outcome subgroups they would like to join. The restructured Gen. Ed. Assessment Committee (Appendix G. General Education Assessment Committee Members) was assembled and began meeting regularly in February 2018.

As the General Education Assessment Committee grappled with the assessment of the three additional Institutional Outcomes, the group debated what criteria should be met for students to participate in the assessment of these general education outcomes. Ultimately, it was determined that students should meet the following criteria: 1) Degree seeking; 2) Sophomore status determined by the completion of 30 or more credit hours. These criteria are in keeping with the approach outlined in Dr. Hatfield's presentation. She recommended that the focus be on what students should know/be able to do when they graduate. By focusing the assessment

on degree-seeking sophomores, HCC is targeting the knowledge and skills of students who are approaching graduation. Since students currently enrolled in dual credit courses will not have completed 30 or more credit hours, it was determined that they would not be included in the data collection. However, dual credit students who have matriculated to Highland and meet the criterion will be included. In the future, data for this subset of students may be examined further to ensure that weaknesses are not apparent in this group of students. These established guidelines are now in place for all five of the general education Institutional Outcomes. Each of the five General Education subgroups have also discussed strategies for ensuring that programs in all degrees are included in this assessment effort. This aspect of the process will be discussed in more detail within each Institutional Outcome section which follows.

Furthermore, the data results for each Institutional Outcome were shared with faculty during the Spring 2018 or the Fall 2018 Opening Days In-service. Faculty were given time to discuss the results and identify strategies for improving the areas found to be weak. At the beginning of the Spring 2019 semester, faculty were surveyed regarding Oral and Written Communication to determine what strategies had been implemented to improve student learning (survey results are discussed within the respective sections below). It is hoped that the next cycle of assessment will show marked improvements in the areas that were targeted for development. The assessment of the five Institutional Outcomes will be addressed in the remainder of this section.

Written Communication:

Institutional Outcome: *Students will be able to produce written work that displays college level skills, insight, and critical thinking through meaningful and appropriate content.*

The assessment of Written Communication is a well-developed, systematic process at Highland that has occurred annually. The most recent assessment cycle was completed utilizing a random sample of final student papers from each of the College's Spring 2017 ENGL 122, Rhetoric and Composition II, courses. These papers were distributed to a set of five faculty and two Student Services staff volunteers (Appendix H. Volunteer Assessor List) who used the College's original Written Communication Rubric to assess students' writing proficiency (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Written Communication Assessment Sheet

SCORE	DESCRIPTION
N/A	Not applicable based on document design and content.
0	**Non-Existent:** The criterion is not present, but should be.
1	**Developing:** Some evidence of this criterion, but it needs to be presented more clearly or better developed.
2	**Meets:** Evidence of this criterion is clear and is appropriate for this document. More could possibly be added.
3	**Exceeds:** Evidence of this criterion is clear, appropriate for this document, and demonstrates practice that is exemplary in its use.

DEVELOPMENT & ORGANIZATION: PAPER NUMBER: _____

							SCORE		COMMENTS
Opens a piece of writing in a meaningful, effective way	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Contains a thesis/theme/objective	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Begins paragraphs with important guiding information	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Develops paragraphs with relevant and sufficient supporting details	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Places body paragraphs in a logical sequence to develop the thesis of the writing piece	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Concludes a piece of writing in a meaningful, effective way	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	

GRAMMAR/MECHANICS:

							SCORE		COMMENTS
Writes sentences that conform to conventional sentence boundaries (no comma splices, run-ons, or fragments)	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Uses apostrophes, commas, semicolons, and other punctuation correctly	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Uses correct verb forms and tenses	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Demonstrates an understanding of standard pronoun use	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Uses correct spelling and syntax	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Proper paper formatting (i.e. citations, headings, page numbers, margins, double spacing)	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	
Chooses clear and effective vocabulary that contributes to the purpose and meaning of the paper	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	

ASSIGNMENT GOALS:

							SCORE		COMMENTS
Demonstrates an understanding of the purpose, audience, and tone for the assignment	N/A	0	.5	1	1.5	2	2.5	3	

PAPER DESIGNATION (Circle one):   Gold   Silver   Bronze

This rubric is divided into two sections: 1) Development & Organization; 2) Grammar/Mechanics. A third section, Assignment Goals, was added during the most recent

cycle when it was noted that addressing the assignment goals was critical to communicating effectively.

The volunteer assessors participated in a series of calibration sessions prior to each paper being reviewed. There were a total of 45 papers that were included in the analysis. An acceptable level of agreement among the volunteers in their assessment of these papers occurred for 10 of the 13 core rubric elements, for the overall rating of the paper, and for the new assignment goals rating. This compared well to prior assessment cycles. As shown in Table 2 the acceptable level of agreement between assessors improved during this assessment cycle. It is believed that the increase in calibration meetings led to a greater inter-rater reliability.

Table 2. Written Communication Rubric Items and Scores with an acceptable level of agreement by assessment year

	Spr 2013	Spr 2014	Fall 2015	Spr 2017
DEVELOPMENT AND ORGANIZATION				
Opening Piece				x
Thesis				x
Paragraph Beginning			x	x
Supporting Details	x	x	x	x
Logical Sequencing	x			
Conclusion			x	x
GRAMMAR/MECHANICS				
Sentence Boundaries	x		x	x
Punctuation			x	x
Verbs	x			
Pronouns			x	
Spelling & Syntax		x		x
Paper Format				x
Vocabulary	x	x		x
TOTAL RUBRIC SCORE	x		x	x
ASSIGNMENT GOALS				x

10 rubric items!

Gen. Ed. Assessment Written Communication Slide 6

For the 10 rubric elements where there inter-rater reliability demonstrated an acceptable level of agreement, the overall rating of the paper, and the assignment goals rating, mean rubric ratings were calculated. For the 10 rubric elements where there was an acceptable level of agreement, there were two items where the mean ratings were at roughly 2 which corresponds to "Meets Criterion." These two items were, "Thesis" and "Spelling and Syntax." The rest of the rubric items were below the "Meets Criterion" threshold.

Even though the mean ratings for the majority of the rubric items were below the "Meets Criterion," they were slightly higher than those in the prior assessment cycle that also used ENGL 122 papers collected in Fall 2015. Therefore, statistical comparisons were conducted for the five items in which there was an acceptable level of agreement in both assessments, and two of the mean ratings were found to be significantly higher. These ratings were for the "Supporting Details" and "Paragraph Beginnings" items. As far as the overall rating of the

papers (Total Rubric Score) comparison, there was no significant difference from the Fall 2015 assessment to the Spring 2017.

These results were presented to faculty during the Fall 2018 Opening Days In-service by two of the faculty volunteer assessors. In the Gen. Ed. Assessment Written Communication presentation, it was noted that Highland students met the criterion related to "Thesis," and "Spelling & Syntax."
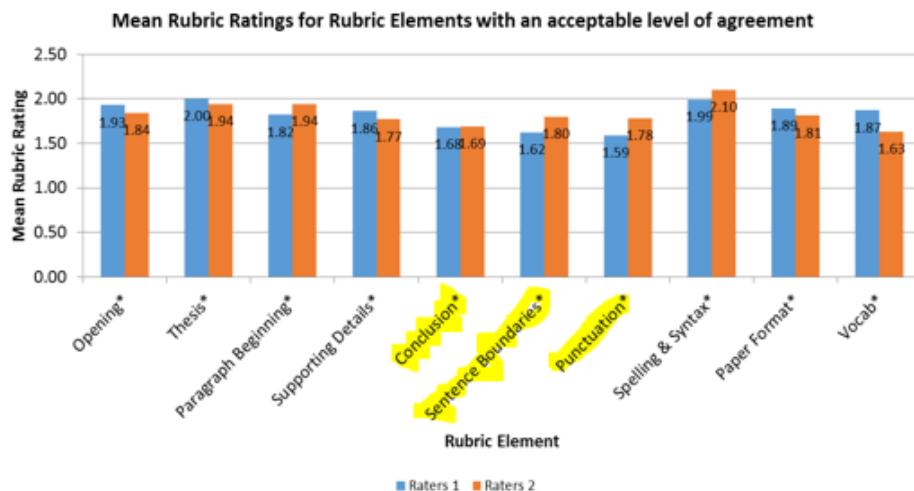
Figure 1a-Highest scores
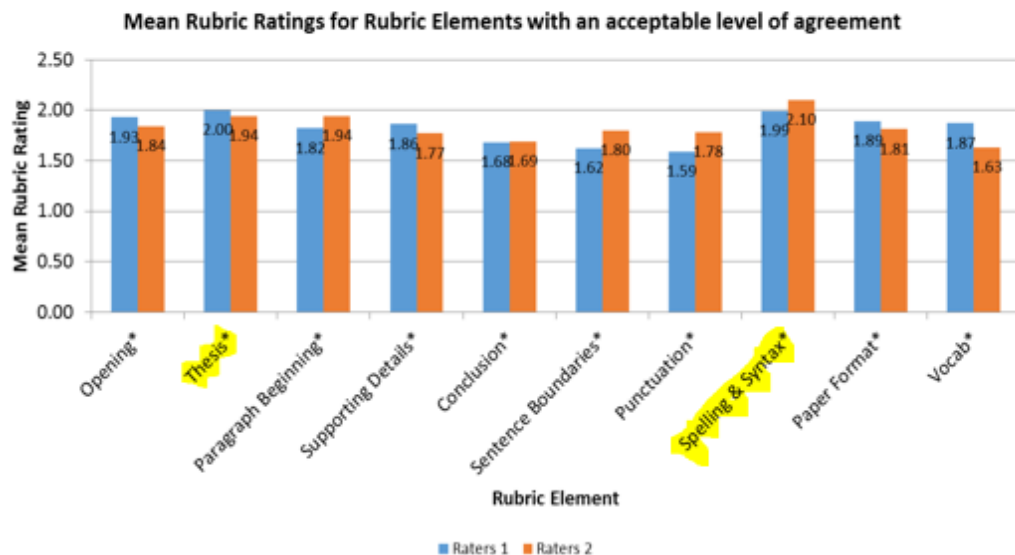
Slide 8

The three areas that had the lowest scores, "Conclusion," "Sentence Boundaries," and "Punctuation" were also pointed out.

Figure 1a-Lowest scores

Slide 9

Faculty also learned that there had been a significant mean increase in the areas of "Paragraph Beginning," and "Supporting Detail" from Fall 2015 to Spring 2017.

Significant mean increase from Fall 15 to Spring 17

Mean Rubric Items for which there was a significant mean rating increase from Fall 15 to Spring 2017
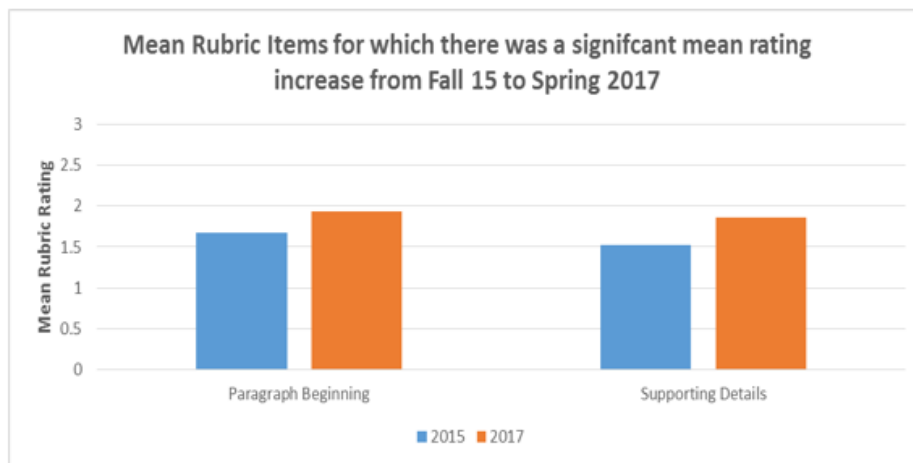
Slide 10

Despite these increases, the mean scores on the rubric items where agreement was established and the total rubric scores overall were low, indicate a lack of proficiency in student writing skills. The faculty volunteer assessors then shared with faculty some ideas for improving Written Communication across campus that were generated in the assessors' discussion of the assessment results.

Ideas for instructors to help improve written communication in all subjects

- Show students the whole rubric
- Incorporate pieces into existing rubric scoring pieces
  - (This rubric has not been used for grading purposes!)
- Be mindful of areas to stress overall where students are deficient
- Consult your colleagues
  - English faculty
  - Library faculty and resources
  - Assessment committee members
 - We are not asking you to be an English expert!
- Other ideas??

These ideas for improvement included incorporating elements of the institutional Written Communication Rubric into the instructor's own assignment rubric and stressing areas that had been identified as deficiencies. Following the presentation, time was allotted for faculty to discuss ways to help reinforce and strengthen students' Written Communication skills, particularly in the three areas with the lowest scores. At the beginning of the Spring 2019 semester, a follow-up survey was sent to faculty to identify the strategies that have been implemented across campus. Of the 31 full-time faculty responding, 21 (67.74%) indicated that students completed a graded Written Communication assignment within the course(s) they taught. Ninety-four percent of these faculty members encouraged proper and correct use of punctuation and proper and correct use of sentence boundaries.


Did you encourage proper and correct use of punctuation (apostrophes, commas, semicolons, and other punctuation)?
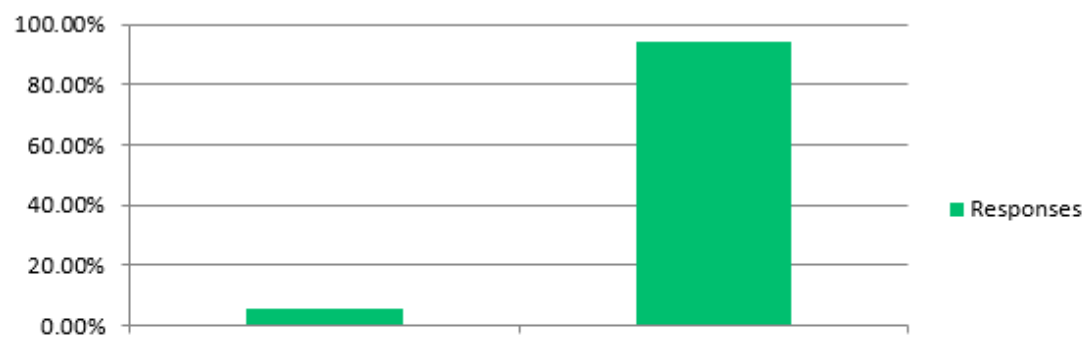
Did you encourage proper and correct use of sentence boundaries (no comma splices, run-ons, or fragments)?
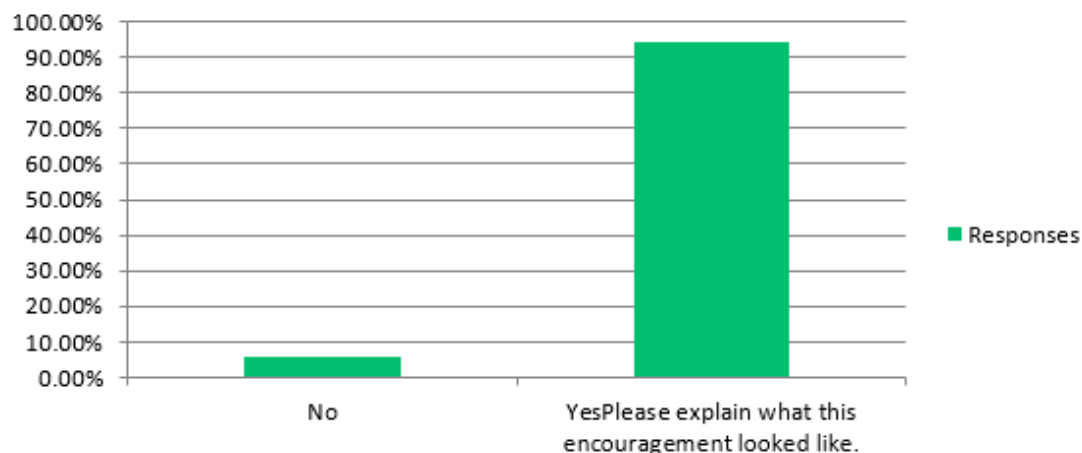
Sixty-four percent of the faculty who included a writing assignment within their course(s) encouraged an effective conclusion.

Did you encourage an effective conclusion (one that adds to the meaning and understanding of the topic)?
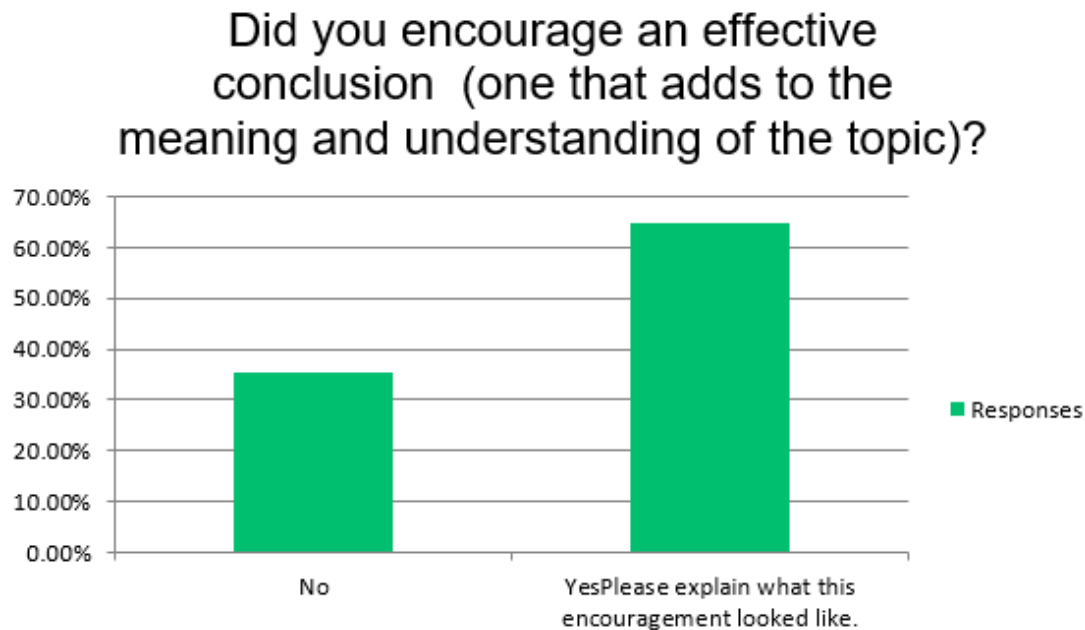
The survey data indicates that strategies were incorporated to address the areas of weakness identified in the most recent assessment cycle. As part of the survey, faculty were also asked what aspects of Written Communication they valued. Their responses will determine what, if any, aspects of the Written Communication Rubric will be revised to ensure it is an appropriate assessment tool for the assessment of Written Communication across the institution.

Since Written Communication is a general education outcome, the expectation is that faculty across the institution will implement teaching and learning strategies aimed at improving students' ability to write effectively.   Psychiatric Nursing, NURS 293, serves as an example of how Written Communication is being addressed across the curriculum. After determining the significance of Written Communication measurement on the course level and program level assessments of the nursing students, a goal stating 80% of the students will score an 80% or better on the Written Communication Assignment titled: Book review: "Crazy: A Father's Search Through America's Mental Health Madness" by Pete Earley was recorded.

An 80% or better benchmark was identified as the standard which serves to ensure the student is able to demonstrate an understanding of the development (organization, grammar and mechanics) and expression of ideas in writing. The rubric for this project was built using the competencies from the course and program outcomes as well as enhanced with the Institutional Outcomes rubric used for general education assessment.

The students in NURS 293 completed a book review and Written Communication Assessment which focused on the needs of the adult Psychiatric population. The results of this assignment and student performance were based on the "Crazy" Book Review Written Communication Assessment (Appendix I. NURS 293 Psychiatric Nursing Assessment of Student Learning

Report Fall 2018). Of the 28 students in NURS 293, 100% of the students scored above 80% on the Written Communication Assignment. The lowest score was an 85%. In total, six students scored between 85%-89%, and 22 students scored between 90%-100% (with two students scoring at 100%).

The Written Communication Grading Rubric demonstrated that the vast majority of points lost to students on this assignment were:

- ✓ Use of correct spelling and grammar
- ✓ Proper paper formatting (APA format): proper citations noted within paper, reference page (hanging indent), page numbers, etc.

Additional points (minimal) were lost to students in the following areas:

- ✓ Choice of clear, effective vocabulary
- ✓ Uses of commas, other punctuation
- ✓ Sentence structure: run-ons

Student understanding of the listed competencies/outcomes:

The learning outcomes were achieved through the students' writing by the students identifying with individuals and families who have received various Mental Illness diagnoses and who are working in their communities (Psychiatrists, case workers, nurses, etc.) and beyond to access resources, assistance, understanding, and acceptance.

- ✓ Advocate for the client's rights and needs.
- ✓ A caring respectful behavior.
- ✓ Interact respectfully with other disciplines in the healthcare setting.
- ✓ Utilize appropriate and accurate communication.
- ✓ Apply principles of teaching/learning in the promotion, restoration, and maintenance of health.
- ✓ Identify and utilize therapeutic communication methods according to client preference and need to assist in achieving client understanding.

The assessment results indicate that when the institutional Written Communication Rubric was applied within this sophomore level course, students were able to demonstrate the desired skill level.

Criminal Justice has also incorporated the assessment of Written Communication within the curriculum. CJS 202, Juvenile Delinquency, includes a research paper assignment. As preparation for the assignment, the instructor discussed timelines for drafting the paper, expectations, citation requirements, appropriate sources, and provided examples for the students. The Spring 2018 assessment results indicate that of the 13 students in the course, six students received 94%, five received 91%, and two received 71% on their research papers, which were graded with the instructor's rubric. The majority of student errors were minor grammatical mistakes and citation mistakes; however, organization and content were well done. As an improvement strategy, the instructor intends to go over proper APA citation guidelines in more depth and incorporate exercises on proper citation and drafting a works cited page (Appendix J. CJS 202 Juvenile Delinquency Assessment Form Spring 2018).

These examples demonstrate that Written Communication is being emphasized and assessed across the institution. To ensure that the assessment of Written Communication is representative of programs across the institution, the Written Communication Workgroup also began evaluating the assessment process itself. Through this effort, it was recognized that the original Written Communication Outcome was not written in the proper format. Thus, the group revised the statement so that it would be measurable and actionable. The workgroup also reviewed all the program Curriculum Maps to identify additional courses across all programs in all degrees where artifacts for Written Communication could be pulled. Once the courses were identified, the workgroup has begun collecting sample assignments from these courses to review. This review will continue during the Spring 2019 semester. The goal is to identify additional artifacts across the institution that can be utilized for assessment purposes. By broadening the samples beyond ENGL 122, the assessment will more accurately reflect the skill level of students across the institution and address HLC's concern that the process be inclusive of all general education courses and programs in all degrees.

Oral Communication:

Institutional Outcome: *Students will be able to prepare and deliver a purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.*

The most recent round of assessment of the college's Oral Communication general education outcome began in Fall 2017. Although the assessment of Oral Communication had been done several times, the assessment process only had enough inter-rater reliability with the data collected in Fall 2016 for the data to be used to determine the proficiency of Highland students' Oral Communication skills. As was the case with the data collected in Fall 2016, there was a significant amount of calibration done among the seven assessors in preparation for the Fall 2017 assessment. The increased calibration sessions were intentionally designed to improve inter-rater reliability and, in turn, the assessment process. As a result of the calibration sessions, further changes were made to the original rubric and scoring guide (Appendix K. Oral Communication Rubric) to document the calibration discussions and the important elements to consider when scoring the rubric items (Appendix L. Oral Communication Rubric Guide).

A random sample of recorded persuasive speeches was collected from each of the College's SPCH 191, Fundamentals of Speech Communication, sections in Fall 2017. These speeches were distributed to a set of five instructor and two professional staff volunteers who used the College's home-grown Oral Communication Rubric to assess students' Oral Communication proficiency (Appendix H. Volunteer Assessor List).

A total of 42 speeches were included in the assessment analysis. An acceptable level of agreement among the volunteers in their assessment occurred for 16 of the 17 rubric elements and for the overall rating of the paper. The item that did not have an acceptable level of agreement was "the extent to which the student utilized an extemporaneous delivery."

For the 16 rubric items where there was an acceptable level of agreement and for the overall rating of the paper, mean rubric ratings were calculated. As shown in Figure 2, while the mean ratings for a few of the rubric items approached a score of 2 which corresponds to the
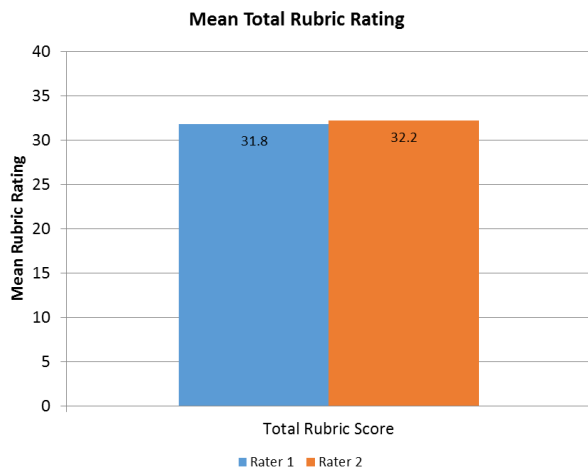
Demonstrates Competency on the rubric, the majority did not. As for the overall rating of the papers, the mean score (Total Rubric Score) was roughly 32 (See Figure 3).

Figure 2.

Mean Rubric Ratings for Rubric Elements with a high-level of inter-rater agreement

Figure 3.

Mean Total Rubric Rating
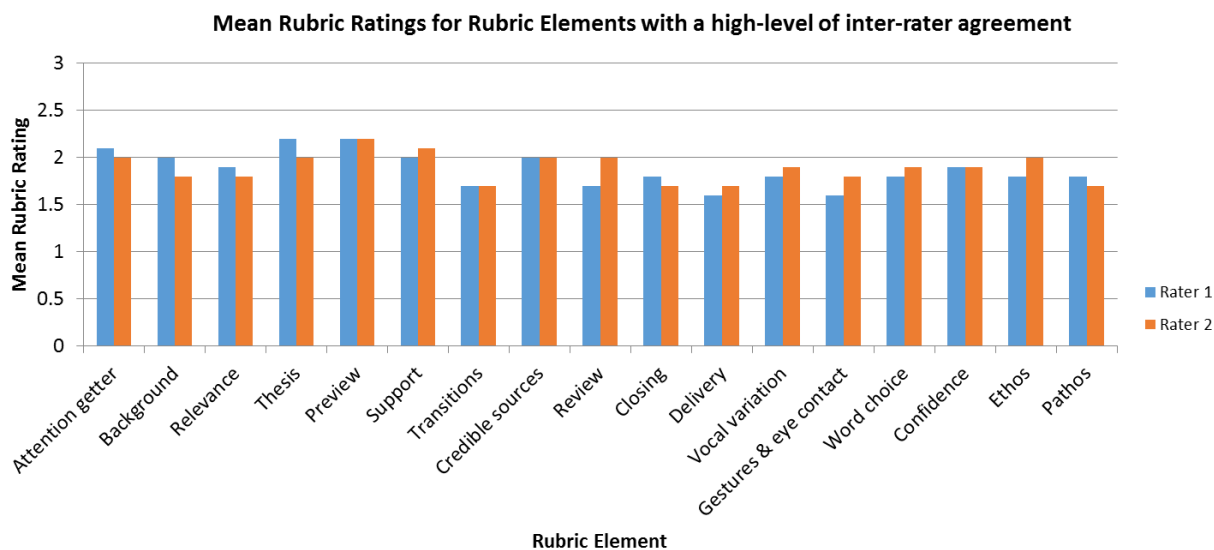
In order to compare the mean rubric item ratings of the present analysis to those in the most recent assessment cycle in Fall 2016, statistical comparisons were conducted for the 15 rubric items for which there was found to be an acceptable level of agreement in both assessments. Significant differences were found for six of these 15 rubric items and as shown in Figure 4, the mean ratings for all six were significantly lower in Fall 2017 than in Fall 2016.

Figure 4.

Mean rubric items for which there was a signifcant mean rating change: Fall 2016 to Fall 2017
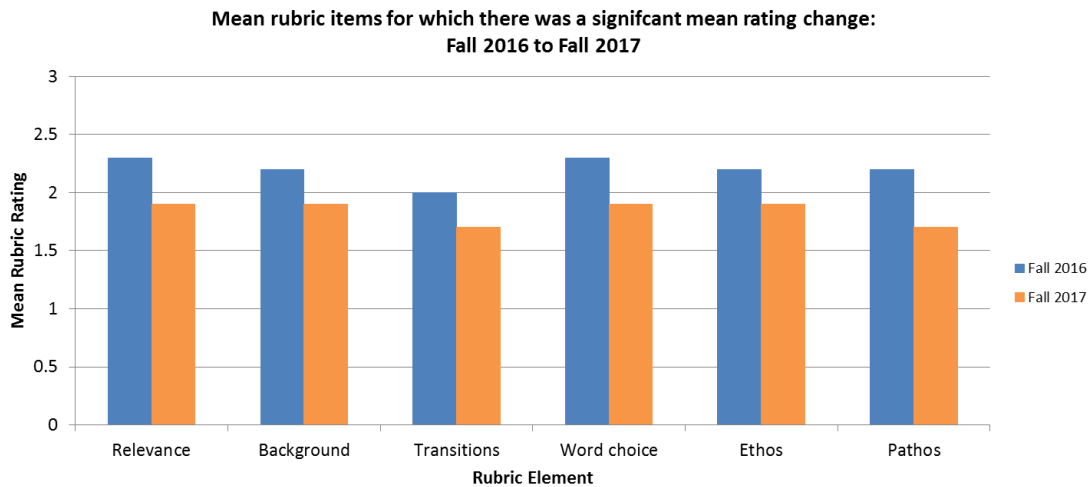
In order to compare the mean overall rating of the papers in the present analysis to the mean overall rating of the papers in Fall 2016, the mean percentages of the total points possible on the rubric were calculated. Because the sheer total number of points possible in 2017 was 51 points, whereas in 2016 it was 54 points, the total number of rubric points could not be compared.[1] A significant difference was found for this overall rating, but like the ratings for the rubric items, this difference in overall mean rating was significantly lower in Fall 2017 than in Fall 2016 (See Figure 5.).

Figure 5.

Significant Mean Percent of Total Rubric Score Change: Fall 2016 to Fall 2017
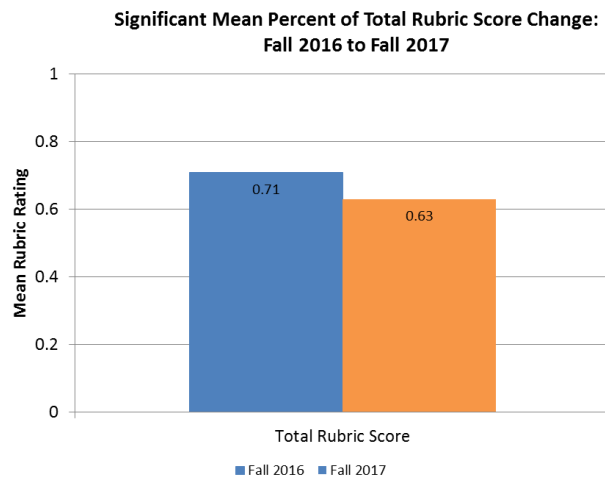
For the fall 2017 assessment, the assessors felt that the rubric item, "Considering and refuting opposing views," was not relevant to the speeches they were assessing. Therefore, this item was not scored as was done with the fall 2017 assessment.

Compared to the last assessment cycle, there were more rubric items where students did not demonstrate competency during the Fall 2017 assessment cycle. In addition, there were several items where the level of competency was significantly less this time compared to last. Since the speeches included in the assessment were given by students who were a mix of both freshman and sophomore, these results could be attributable to the make-up of the students. While mastery is not even necessarily expected at the sophomore level, the expectation would be that sophomore students would have had more opportunity to present and, therefore, would demonstrate higher skill levels.

Another observation was that many changes were made to the rubric in between the two assessments. Specifically, a description for each score was given for every rubric item, perhaps reducing the possibility that scores could be inflated. In addition, assessors commented that the rubric seemed much more "catered" to the speeches and so much so, that if the speech followed the rubric, the speech was easy to assess. If it did not, it was much more difficult.

It is suspected that these diminished results may have occurred because of the many, more specific, changes that were made to the rubric in between assessments and/or simply because the make-up of the students may have been those with less college experience and, therefore, less opportunity to have given presentations and learn from their experiences. A result from the latest administration of the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) helps support this conclusion. Specifically, in discussion of the CCSSE results, faculty felt that the mean indicating how often students indicated they had made a class presentation was lower than they would have expected. One adjustment for the next assessment round will be to only include speeches of students who are sophomores (with 30 or more credit hours) and who are degree seeking. This aligns with the methodologies currently being carried out with the assessment of the College's other general education outcomes and is expected to help ensure inclusion of students who have had more opportunities to hone their skills and grow in their competencies.

The Oral Communication assessment results were presented to all faculty at the January 2019 Opening Days In-service. An email was sent to faculty at the end of the Fall 2018 semester to help them prepare for this discussion.

Happy middle of December,
As we continue our institutional assessment efforts, particularly with Oral and Written Communication, we need to document curriculum changes that have been made based on our assessment results. At the January 2018 Opening Days, the assessment results for Oral Communication were shared and faculty spent time brainstorming improvement strategies. These strategies have since been categorized into three main areas associated with delivering an effective presentation:. Organization, Clarity, and Delivery.

As you may recall, the assessment results for Written Communication were shared at the August 2018 Opening Days. Based on the findings, students written skills were found to be weaker in the following areas:

- Punctuation- Uses apostrophes, commas, semicolons, and other punctuation correctly
- Sentence Boundaries- Writes sentences that conform to conventional sentence boundaries (no comma splices, run-ons, or fragments)
- Conclusion- Concludes a piece of writing in a meaningful, effective way

If you include an oral presentation and/or a written assignment within your class(es), please consider how you have or will incorporate one or more of these teaching strategies within your class to help impact institutional improvement in these areas. Documenting how you incorporate this teaching/learning strategy and the changes that you see as a result will be important information for our upcoming HLC Focused Report and visit. While it is evident we are assessing the institutional outcomes, it is **critical** that we have turned the assessment results into strategies for improvement. In addition, since these are institutional outcomes, we must demonstrate how these strategies are being implemented <u>across</u> the curriculum to impact improvement. ***While we have made great strides in the assessment of student learning, without the 'closing the loop' aspect, the assessment effort falls short of the expectation.***

At Opening Days in January, we will be sharing the most recent results for Oral Communication and asking you to brainstorm strategies for improvement in a similar way. We will also be asking what strategies you have already implemented or will plan to implement to impact improvement. **Please be prepared to share those strategies and the results with your colleagues on that day.**

Christina Kuberski
Executive Vice President
Highland Community College
2998 West Pearl City Road
Freeport, IL 61032
(815) 235-6121 ext. 3417

In addition to learning the Oral Communication assessment results, faculty were surveyed regarding three key Oral Communication areas: 1) What they had done; 2) What they valued; 3) What they planned to do. The Oral Communication survey results indicate that 31 of the 42 full-time faculty who were present (74%) include one or more opportunities for Oral Communication in their classes. Of the strategies that had been previously identified by faculty to improve the Oral Communication of students across the institution, improving eye contact was the strategy that had been emphasized the most. Twenty-four of the 31 faculty (77%) responded that they encouraged eye contact for speeches. Seventeen of the 31 faculty (55%) responded that they provided a rubric to students before the speech, and nine (29%) indicated they have incorporated portions of the Oral Communication institutional rubric into their assignments. Furthermore, 11 of the 31 faculty (35%) indicated that a model or example of a speech was provided for students prior to the presentation. Faculty were also surveyed about their plans for addressing Oral Communication within their Spring 2019 or Fall 2019 courses. Twenty-seven of the 42 full-time faculty members present (64%) indicated they will have one or more opportunities for Oral Communication in their classes in the upcoming semesters which will help address the CCSSE result indicating that students perceive that they have not made a class presentation very often. Faculty spent time discussing how they will continue to make

changes in their courses to address the present Oral Communication results. The responses indicate that the areas of organization, clarity, and delivery will be equally emphasized.
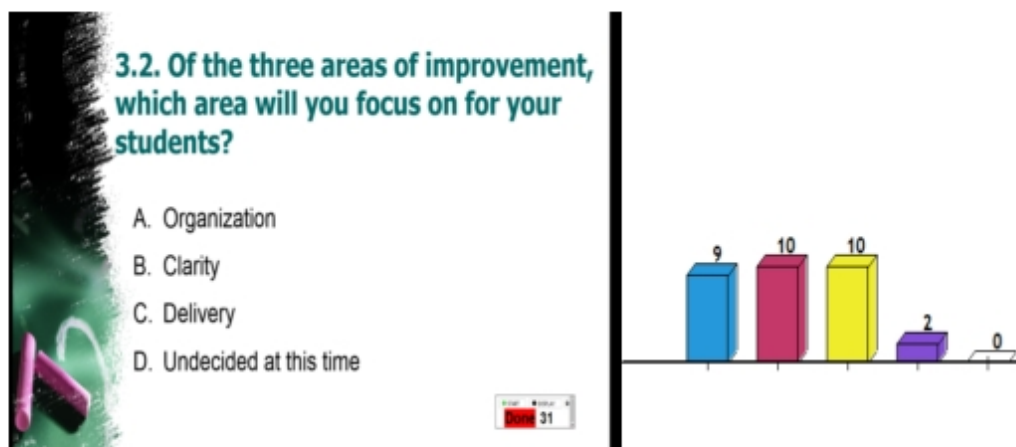
PowerPoint Opening Days Survey Part III

As the survey results indicate, some faculty have incorporated portions of the Oral Communication Rubric into their assignments. As an example, the THEA 196, Introduction to Theatre, course utilized the Oral Communication Rubric to gauge the students' oral presentation skills. The assessment benchmark states that 75% of the students will score 75% or better on the oral presentation using portions of the Oral Communication Rubric. The assessment completed in Fall 2018 revealed that 26 of the 27 students (96%) assessed met the goal, thus exceeding the benchmark. Given the results, the instructor did not identify any key curriculum improvements tied to this outcome (Appendix M. THEA 196 Introduction to Theatre Assessment Report Form Fall 2018).

Understanding that Oral Communication is an essential skill and one of Highland's Institutional Outcomes, the faculty teaching the NURS 191, Fundamentals of Nursing, course in Spring 2018 established the goal of 80% of the students scoring an 80% or higher on the group presentation demonstrating the following competencies: Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to collaborate with others in healthcare and educational communities.

Competencies:

1.   Interact respectfully with the healthcare team.
2.   Demonstrate open communication.
3.   Practice mutual respect in communication.

The benchmark of 80% achieved on the group presentation was achieved by 100% of the students. Clinical documentation has shown marked improvement with average student grades increasing from 83% on the first week clinical assignment to 96% on the last week clinical assignment of the semester (Appendix N. NURS 191 Fundamentals of Nursing Assessment of Student Learning Report Spring 2018).

According to the curriculum meeting report on this assessment, Oral Communication and clinical documentation are the primary methods of communication within the nursing field. By developing these skills early in their nursing career, the student will have the ability to advance their skills as the program moves forward. This outcome will continue to be measured in subsequent semesters until five data points are measurable to determine a significant pattern. This change has also provided insight into the presentations completed in the capstone course, NURS 294, Health and Illness III, of the nursing degree. The NURS 294 course will also assess the Oral Communication skills to book-end the program outcomes and add to the Institutional Outcome measures.

These examples illustrate how faculty are addressing Oral Communication across the curriculum. To ensure that the assessment of Oral Communication is representative of all programs, in addition to adjusting the student criteria of those selected for the assessment process, the Oral Communication Assessment Committee will also consider including speeches from other courses in the assessment process. Specifically, the assessors will investigate the speech assignments in courses where the College's curriculum mapping efforts show that the Oral Communication skills of students are expected to be at more of a mastery level. Including a broader sample of speeches will most likely require changes to the rubric again, making it less tailored to one type of speech and more applicable for assessing other types of speeches. The survey results regarding what is valued by faculty will guide the revision of the rubric. Collecting a broader sample of speeches from across the institution addresses HLC's concerns and will ensure that all programs in all degrees have been included in the assessment effort.

Critical Thinking:

Institutional Outcome: *Students will possess a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.*

To develop and implement a plan to assess the General Education outcome of Critical Thinking (CT) within the Spring 2018 semester, a five-member faculty workgroup (Appendix O. General Education Assessment Workgroups) was formed in January 2018. The workgroup met every-other week throughout the Spring 2018 semester to formulate and implement an assessment plan. Realizing the difficulty of creating a reliable and valid rubric and the difficulty of quickly determining which classes could provide artifacts, the workgroup considered a standardized test of Critical Thinking. After examining several options, the group selected the HEIghten Critical Thinking Assessment (developed by ETS: https://www.ets.org/heighten). The assessment was chosen because the competencies measured by the test align well with the competencies discussed in the workgroup for this Institutional Outcome.

The competencies assessed include:

- Students are able to evaluate evidence apart from the position advanced by an argument.

- Students are able to analyze and evaluate the structure of an argument.

- Students are able to identify implications and consequences that go beyond the original argument.

- Students are able to construct or complete arguments that are sound and valid; that is, arguments that are both structurally and evidentially strong.

- Students are able to understand, evaluate and create arguments that invoke causal claims or that offer explanations for collections of information

Other factors impacting the group's decision included the data summary and information provided by ETS once the assessment is complete and the cost of implementation.

As will be further explained in the Quantitative Literacy (QL) section that immediately follows, the QL workgroup also selected the HEIghten as their assessment tool. From this point on, the two workgroups joined forces to formulate implementation plans. On April 16, 2018, the test link and instruction sheet regarding both the Critical Thinking and Quantitative Literacy exams was emailed to 609 degree-seeking sophomore students, those that had completed at least 30 credit hours, with the goal of obtaining a sample of 150 (25% response rate). Students were provided an incentive to complete the assessment online with a chance to win one of 25 $20 gift cards.

One early lesson learned is that students do not read email regularly. As of May 15, it appeared that only 237 students (39%) had read the email. In addition to the email sent to students, a text was also sent letting students know they should check email to see if they are eligible to participate. Also, those faculty teaching courses with 10 or more sophomores enrolled were emailed asking if they would remind and encourage their students to take the assessment. Two workgroup members also spoke in classes of nursing students to encourage participation and explain the assessment. Finally, to entice participation, a pizza party was held on May 10 where students who completed the exam could enjoy free pizza – and those who had not yet completed the exam could take it in the computer lab and then enjoy pizza. Despite all these efforts, only 11 students completed assessments in Critical Thinking as of May 11, 2018. An additional hurdle was that students were given the option of completing one or two assessments (Critical Thinking and/or Quantitative Reasoning). Asking students to complete two 45-minute assessments on their own time may have been too much. In a normal assessment cycle, it is unlikely students would be asked to complete more than one standardized assessment test in a semester. However, the need to gather two years of data for the 2019 HLC Focused Visit required both tests be administered to the same population of students within the same timeframe.

The majority of students who participated in the Spring 2018 assessment (20 of the 31 students who completed the assessment) participated during a class when the instructor used part of the final exam time to have students complete the assessment test. This is a good indicator of how useful class time is for getting students to complete the assessment. At the close of Spring 2018, utilizing class time to administer the assessment was discussed as a strategy for getting higher completion rates in the next round of assessment. Another possibility discussed both by the Critical Thinking (CT) Workgroup and the Gen. Ed. Assessment Committee was tying the completion of assessment tests to graduation requirements and/or transcript holds. In-class completion or creating a graduation requirement seem to be the most likely avenues for getting a significant participation rate for 2019. It was agreed that these possibilities as well as brainstorming other ideas would be discussed further with faculty during Opening Days In-service Fall 2018.

As planned, time was allotted during the Fall 2018 Opening Days for the Critical Thinking and Quantitative Literacy Workgroups to share their progress, challenges, and data results with faculty. The HEIghten Assessment Test process and competencies to be measured were summarized for the faculty.

It was explained that 150 completed tests were needed to make statistically sound inferences, but HCC only had 31 students who completed the test. Of those 31, only 23 were in the target population (degree-seeking students with 30 or more completed credit hours). Furthermore, only 11 students completed the Critical Thinking test; only 12 students completed the Quantitative Reasoning test. Thus, it was determined that the sample was too small to be representative of the population. That said, it was noted that HCC's target sample average on the exam was 158.4783 compared to 162.2 from the comparison group. On a positive note, seven percent of HCC's target sample scored between 173 and 180 and were registered as Advanced. Considering that HEIghten is primarily administered at four-year institutions, this was encouraging.

Data Results:
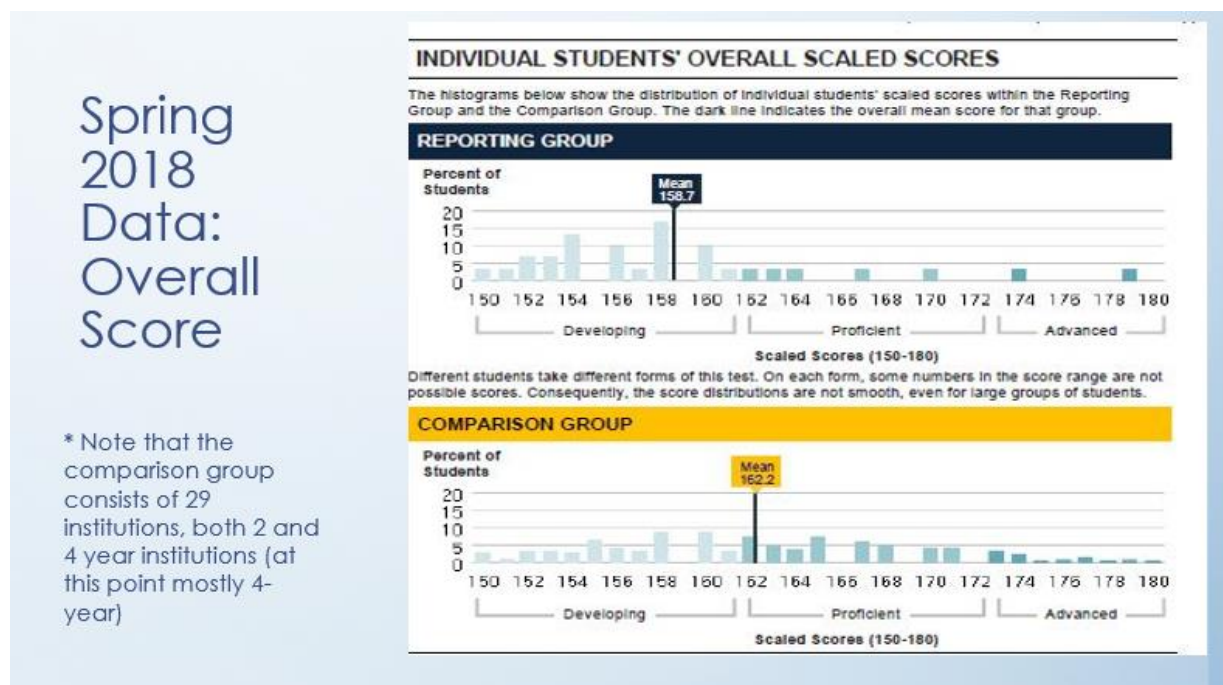
After the assessment briefing, faculty were given an opportunity to work in small groups and brainstorm strategies for improving student participation in the assessment of these two (CT and QL) Institutional Outcomes. They were asked to consider the following possibilities: 1) In-class time for the test; 2) Other incentives to motivate completion (i.e., graduation fee waived); 3) Graduation penalty if test is not completed (i.e., graduation hold, transcript hold). After the discussion, it was agreed that faculty would be surveyed to determine how to proceed. The survey results indicated the following:

Q6 Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:

Answered: 25   Skipped: 0
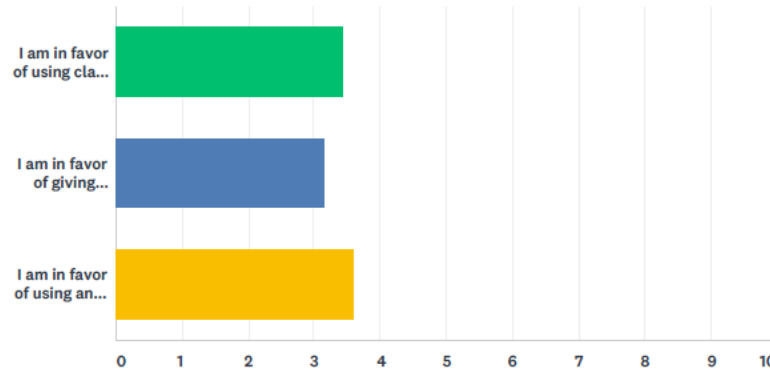
	5STRONGLY AGREE	4AGREE	3NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	2DISAGREE	1STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
I am in favor of using class time to perform the critical thinking and quantitative literacy assessments.	16.00% 4	36.00% 9	28.00% 7	16.00% 4	4.00% 1	25	3.44
I am in favor of giving students extra credit in my course if they take the critical thinking and quantitative literacy assessments.	16.00% 4	32.00% 8	16.00% 4	24.00% 6	12.00% 3	25	3.16
I am in favor of using an external incentive (raffle, graduation requirement, waiving of graduation fees, etc.) to encourage students to take the critical thinking and quantitative literacy assessments.	12.00% 3	52.00% 13	28.00% 7	0.00% 0	8.00% 2	25	3.60

The Critical Thinking and Quantitative Literacy Workgroups met in September 2018 to examine and discuss the feedback from Opening Days and the Opening Days survey results regarding how to administer the Critical Thinking and Quantitative Reasoning HEIghten test. Although "incentives" slightly edged out class time in terms of preferences, there was not much difference between the two (offering extra credit was the least popular option). The group discussed possible incentives and concluded that even a small prize guaranteed to every test-taker would be cost-prohibitive, and there seemed to be little agreement on how large an incentive would be needed to get a sample of 150 students interested in taking the test on their own time. Also reaching students via email is problematic, so finding ways to advertise the test and incentives would be an obstacle. The workgroup concluded that it was best to try a different approach rather than simply trying the same tactic with different incentives, especially since only 31 participants in Spring 2018 fell significantly short of the goal of 150 participants (17%). As a long-term strategy, tying the assessment to a graduation requirement (or a fee waiver, etc.) may be the best approach since taking class time for assessment tests on a regular basis does not seem to be a preferred option. However, it was agreed that administering the assessment during class time is the best option for the Spring 2019 assessment, as it will ensure student participation.

The Critical Thinking Workgroup operating in conjunction with the Quantitative Literacy Workgroup and the Institutional Research office determined a reasonable threshold of sophomores in a class (i.e., 70% sophomores in the class) to obtain an appropriate sample for each test. Although enrollment numbers change through the first few days of classes, courses were identified prior to the end of the Fall 2018 semester. The instructors whose courses were selected were contacted at the end of the Fall 2018 semester so that a test day could be built into the Spring 2019 schedule. Furthermore, instructors of the courses selected can choose an administration date during a larger range, weeks four through eight of the semester, allowing instructors more options for working the test date smoothly into their course. All data is to be collected prior to Spring Break (March 18, 2019) so that it can be analyzed and shared with faculty prior to the HLC Focused Visit in April 2019. It is anticipated that faculty will discuss the findings and identify improvement strategies for both Critical Thinking and Quantitative Literacy during the Fall 2019 Opening Days In-service.

Quantitative Literacy:

Institutional Outcome: *Students will demonstrate the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations.*

The five-member faculty workgroup (Appendix O. General Education Assessment Workgroups) identified five key quantitative reasoning skills that students would obtain:

- Interpretation- The ability to explain information in mathematical forms*
- Representation- The ability to convert information into mathematical forms*
- Calculation- The ability to solve a mathematical algorithm and obtain a number or value
- Analysis- The ability to make judgements, draw conclusions, and evaluate assumptions
- Communication- The skill to express quantitative information

   *Mathematical forms are defined as equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, words

The workgroup then created a rubric that would be used to assess students' abilities in these areas.

Quantitative Literacy Rubric

	Mastery	Developing	Introductory
Interpretation *Ability to explain information in mathematical forms*	Makes appropriate inferences based upon accurate explanations of mathematical information	Accurately explains mathematical information	Attempts to accurately explain mathematical information but makes some errors
Representation *Ability to convert information into mathematical forms*	Converts relevant information into insightful mathematical forms that contributes to further understanding	Converts relevant information into correct mathematical forms	Converts information into incorrect mathematical forms
Calculation *Ability to solve a mathematical algorithm and obtain a number or value*	Calculations are correct and comprehensive	Calculations are partially correct and comprehensive	Calculations are attempted but incorrect and not comprehensive
Analysis *Ability to make judgements, draw conclusions, and evaluate assumptions*	Uses quantitative data to draw correct conclusions and successfully evaluates assumptions	Partially uses quantitative data to draw conclusions and evaluates assumptions	Attempts to analyze data but cannot draw conclusions or evaluate inherent assumptions
Communication *Skill in expressing quantitative information*	Successfully supports quantitative claims with correct and effective quantitative information	Uses quantitative information to support quantitative claims but it is not effectively connected to the argument	Unsuccessfully attempts to support quantitative claims with correct and effective quantitative information

*Mathematical forms are defined as equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, words

However, like the Critical Thinking Workgroup, the Quantitative Literacy Workgroup realized the difficulty in trying to quickly determine what the artifacts would be for this type of assessment. Given the expectation that the assessment would begin Spring 2018, the workgroup also explored standardized tests that would address these skills. It was determined that the ETS HEIghten Quantitative Reasoning Exam was aligned well with HCC's expectations. Once the ETS HEIghten test was selected, the Quantitative Literacy Workgroup collaborated with the Critical Thinking Workgroup to create an assessment process and set a participation goal. As with the assessment of Critical Thinking, for students to participate in the Quantitative Literacy assessment, they had to meet the general education assessment criteria: 1) Degree seeking; 2) Sophomore status determined by the completion of 30 or more credit hours. The communication between the workgroups led to the decision that the invitation to students to complete both HEIghten exams would be done together. An email was drafted and sent to students who met the criteria to participate in the assessment effort (Appendix P. Assessment of Student Learning Email).

As indicated previously, the results were disappointing. Since only 12 students completed the Quantitative Literacy exam, there was not sufficient data to draw any conclusions or for the workgroup to create a report. This information, along with the Critical Thinking findings, was shared with faculty at the Fall 2018 Opening Days In-service. As explained in the Critical Thinking section of this report, it was agreed that these two assessments would be administered simultaneously in Spring 2019 and that the implementation method (i.e., in class, outside of class with incentives) would be based on the results of the faculty discussion and survey. To

improve the process and ensure a larger sample of student participation, like the Critical Thinking assessment, the Quantitative Literacy assessment will be administered in those classes that have been identified to have 70% sophomores in the class. In addition to meeting the sample target, this should also ensure that students from all programs in all degrees have been included in the assessment effort.

Assessment will be completed prior to Spring Break so it can be analyzed and disseminated before the April HLC Focused Visit. Since there was not enough data collected in Spring 2018 to be considered, the Spring 2019 data will serve as the benchmark for both Critical Thinking and Quantitative Literacy. After a few assessment cycles have occurred, faculty will be asked to review the data and analyze trends. The process of administering the assessment within the classroom will also be re-evaluated to determine the effectiveness of this method long-term. HCC recognizes that it still has room to learn and fine-tuning to do to effectively utilize a standardized test as an assessment tool. Therefore, HCC will strive to improve the process and the results with each assessment cycle.

Information Literacy:

Institutional Outcome: *Students will engage in reflective discovery of information, evaluate information based on an understanding of how it is produced and valued, synthesize information to create new knowledge and participate ethically in communities of learning.*

The Information Literacy faculty workgroup began their work in Fall 2017 (Appendix O. General Education Assessment Workgroups). They began by creating an Information Literacy rubric based upon the new standards for Information Literacy from the Association of College and Research Library's new (2016) standards document, the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education. In the process of deciding which criteria to include, the workgroup consulted examples available from other institutions of either rubrics based on the ACRL Framework, or rubrics that were used for assessing Information Literacy through looking at research papers or (in a few cases) bibliographies or works cited lists. In the end, looking at the ACRL Framework document, it was determined which of the six Information Literacy "frames" from the Framework seemed most suited to what students at the community college level are expected to learn.

The workgroup decided to implement the first round of assessment by utilizing the papers that had been collected for the most recent Written Communication assessment which were a random sample of final student papers from each of the College's Spring 2017 ENGL 122, Rhetoric and Composition II, courses. Because these papers are research papers where students are required to present a position and integrate sources to support the position, it was determined that these research papers would serve as the artifacts to appropriately assess students' Information Literacy skills. In addition, selecting this representative sample allowed the workgroup to proceed more quickly. Utilizing the same parameters established for general education assessment only papers written by degree-seeking students having earned over 30 credit hours at Highland were included in the sample.

The committee reviewed the Information Literacy Rubric with the intention of refining it and beginning the process of calibration. Before utilizing the rubric for assessment, the committee

reviewed each of the criteria measured, standards of achievement, and descriptors that make up the rubric. Adjustments to the descriptors for two of the learning outcomes in the rubric were made in order to better define the standards for them. The committee agreed to apply the rubric (Figure 6) to a single student submission as an initial application to gain practice using the rubric and identify any additional fine-tuning necessary. After applying the rubric to an initial student sample, the committee identified and made further refinements to descriptors. Satisfied with the precision of language and usability of the rubric, the committee began the process of calibration and met three additional times to tweak the wording in the rubric and to come to greater agreement.

Figure 6

Information Literacy Learning Objectives Rubric

Learning Objective Learners should be able to:	"No" Not Evidenced	"Yes, but" Demonstrates Emerging Understanding	"Yes" Demonstrates Competency	"Yes, and" Demonstrates Mastery
1. determine an appropriate scope of investigation;	Thesis is outside of assignment scope	Thesis is within assignment scope, but project strays from thesis scope	Thesis and project both match assignment scope	Thesis and project both match assignment scope, additional avenues of investigation are proposed
2. match information needs and search strategies to appropriate search tools;	Does not incorporate external information	Incorporates external information, but few are from appropriate medium for information need	A majority of external information from an appropriate medium/tool	Incorporates information from multiple appropriate mediums/tools
3. use research tools and indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper this credibility;	Not supported by credible sources	Supported by few sources of credibility	Supported by a majority of credible sources	Uses a majority of credible sources and addresses elements that may temper credibility.
4. synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources and draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of information;	No discernable conclusion or analysis	Conclusion present, but not consistently supported by sources	Reasonable conclusion supported by multiple sources	Reasonable conclusion supported by rational interpretation and analysis of sources
5. give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation.	Sources not cited	Attempt at attribution or citation with significant formatting errors	Consistent attribution and citation with minor errors	Attribution and citation consistent with project requirements

After calibration was complete, a total of 24 papers were included in the analysis. An acceptable level of agreement among the workgroup members in their assessment occurred for

three of the five core rubric elements and for the overall rating of the paper. More information about the measures utilized to make this determination can be found in Appendix Q. Information Literacy Data Report Spring 2018. The three rubric elements where there was an acceptable level of agreement were *Scope of Investigation*, *Source Credibility*, and *Proper Citations*.

For these three rubric elements and for the overall rating of the paper, a mean rubric rating was calculated for each group of raters. As shown in Figure 7, the mean ratings for all three approached a score of 2, which corresponds to the *Demonstrates Competency* on the rubric. As shown in Figure 8, the mean overall rating (Total Rubric Score) was 8.1 out of a possible 15 for the first group of raters and 9.6 for the second group of raters.

Figure 7

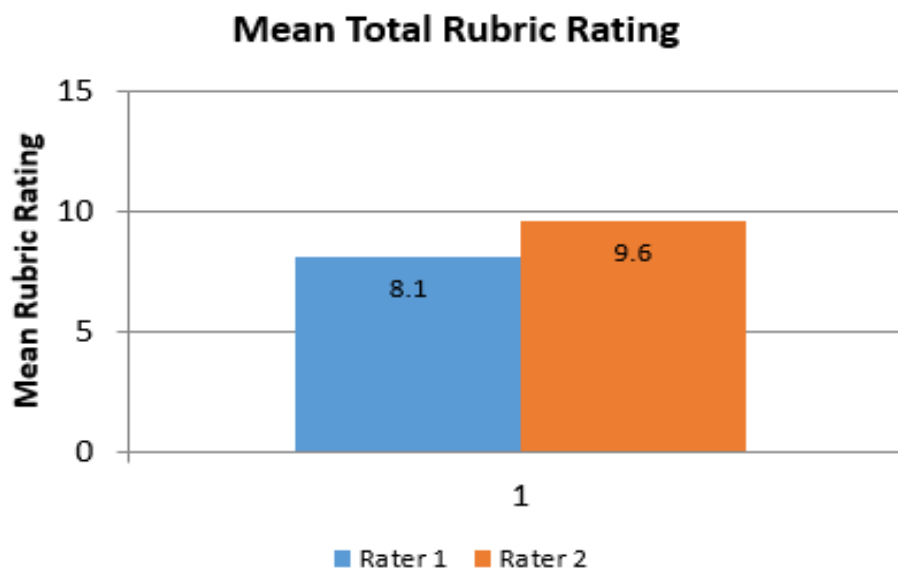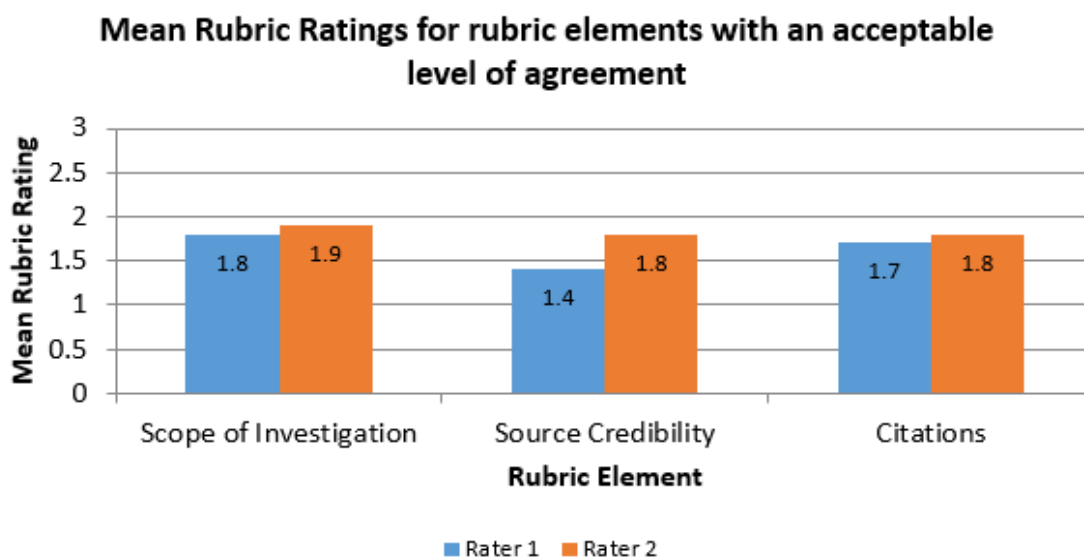Mean Rubric Ratings for rubric elements with an acceptable level of agreement

Figure 8

The assessment results were shared with faculty at the Fall 2018 Opening Days In-service. Since the results indicate that students with sophomore status and enrolled in ENGL 122 are still developing Information Literacy skills, faculty were encouraged to include Information Literacy tools and exercises in their classes. They were reminded of several Information Literacy opportunities provided by the library including Rx for Research, the Information Literacy Unit embedded in the First Year Experience course, librarian classroom visits, Information Literacy instructional videos that are available resources for classrooms or individuals, and collection and assignment support.

An example of utilizing Information Literacy assessment data to improve the curriculum occurred within HCC's First Year Experience course, which is required of all degree-seeking students. Information Literacy is one of the units covered in this course, and it is assessed utilizing an end of unit assignment. During the Fall 2017 round of assessment, the criterion "Understanding How Information is Valued" was identified as in need of attention. Since this criterion was the last to be presented in the assessment instrument and also the most difficult element for students to complete as an open-ended question, this question was placed earlier in the assignment. This was done under the theory that some students were fatigued by the end of the assignment and giving this area less attention than it needed.

The same assessment scale that was used in Fall 2017 to assess the First Year Experience Information Literacy unit student assignments was used again in Fall 2018.

As the results for the Information Literacy unit were recorded, the faculty realized that it would be valuable to apply the same terminology and levels of achievement to both the course level First Year Experience assessment and the Information Literacy General Education Outcome assessment. Although they had previously used a 1-5 numerical scale to display results, they mapped this scale to the four level "Mastery, Competency, Emerging Competency, and Not Evidenced" scale used for the Institutional Outcome. The levels were mapped according to the table below:

Numerical Scale	Outcome Competency Achievement Scale
1	Not Evidenced
2	Emerging Competence
3	
4	Competence
5	Mastery

For each of the four criteria assessed, "Reflective Discovery of Information," "Understanding How Information is Valued," "Use of Information in Creating New Knowledge," and "Participating

Ethically in Communities of Learning," at least 98% of students placed at Emerging Competency or higher.

An average of just above 87% of the students achieved Competency or Mastery in "Reflective Discovery of Information" (86%), "Use of Information in Creating New Knowledge" (89%), and "Participating Ethically in Communities of Learning" (87%).

However, a much lower percentage of students (67%) achieved Competency or Mastery on the "Understanding How Information is Valued" outcome. This mirrored the results from the assessment of the General Education Outcomes, where the Source Credibility outcome also showed the lowest composite score, μ = 1.6, just between Emerging Competency and Competency (Appendix R. Information Literacy General Education Outcome Assessment Presentation Fall 2018).

Results from both rounds of First Year Experience Information Literacy Assessment and the General Education Information Literacy Outcome Assessment Workshops indicate that "Understanding How Information is Valued" is a challenge for HCC students. This is understandable since it involves the application of some higher-level thinking to evaluate research sources and articulate both "how" and "why" a source is determined to be credible or not. Acknowledging that, it is believed that student learning can be improved in this area.

Based on these results, the assessors concluded that the previously proposed theory about the placement of the "Understanding How Information is Valued" element in the assessment assignment was not a significant contributor to the lower results previously recorded.

In order to improve student outcomes, the assessors propose multiple approaches. First, within the First Year Experience Information Literacy unit, additional time will be devoted to teaching this topic and a new approach will be developed to cover it during the lesson. The assessors also felt that the design of the element in the assignment used to assess this criterion may have been confusing to students and propose to redevelop the element of the assignment used to assess this criterion to match the new approach.

These efforts within First Year Experience will be combined with efforts outside of that context to improve student learning of the "Understanding How Information Is Valued" criteria as an element of the Information Literacy General Education Outcome. These plans include offering and heavily promoting recurring instructional workshop sessions on recognizing and evaluating scholarly sources and critical appraisal of news, as well as creating and promoting new instructional content to be shared with other faculty for integration in subject area classes.

In addition to the previously mentioned curriculum changes, another example of a curriculum change resulting from these assessment results occurred in the Introduction to Psychology, PSY 161, course. The Research "Scavenger Hunt" assignment was designed to help introduce students to the importance of source credibility and to understand the distinction between scholarly and popular sources before completing the article analysis assignment.

Introduction to Psychology (PSY 161)
Research "Scavenger Hunt"

This class is designed not only to introduce you to the world of human behavior, but to encourage critical thinking skills as well. You will be asked to independently examine assumptions, claims, and research data with a skeptical eye. In an era of social media and "fake news", this skill is crucial. The **Article Analysis and Critique** assignment is designed to help develop that skill. As you have already learned, the first step is to obtain an article on a topic related to the psychological sciences. For this assignment, you will be searching the library's physical collections and online database for two "scholarly" and two "popular" articles (see reverse for a general description of the difference). Create a bibliography or "works cited" page listing your sources using APA style (see APA Style Guide and other resources linked to the Moodle site for this course). Beneath each of the references, include an explanation of why you listed it as scholarly or not. You must include at least two *physical* sources obtained from the library's collection.

Scholarly vs. Popular Articles

What is a "scholarly" article?

- An article that exists to publish the results of research performed by experts in a particular field. Those experts are called "Scholars." These sources are subject to peer review before publishing. They are often called "**Peer Reviewed**" articles.
- Uses advanced language and vocabulary.
- Often goes into great detail. These can get pretty long.
- Typically includes cited information from other scholarly sources and includes a bibliography to show where the information comes from.
- Written in an academic or scholarly format. These read like formal papers with introductions, various sections, and a conclusion rather than a story.

What is a "popular" article?

- An article written by a journalist or non-expert intended to cover an interesting topic. They are usually published in a magazine, paper or website that exists to sell advertisements.
- These sources use simple everyday language.
- They typically don't go into enormous detail. They also tend to be shorter than scholarly articles.
- Popular articles don't usually include citations or a bibliography.
- They read more like a story rather than a formal paper.

The assessment results for Fall 2018 and Spring 2019 are summarized in the following table:

	Exceeds (5/5)	Meets (4/5)	Does Not Meet (3/5)	Did Not Complete (0/5)
Fall 2018 (55 students)	41/55 75%	3/55 5%	4/55 8%	7/55 13%
Spring 2019 (35 students)	22/35 63%	1/35 3%	5/35 14%	7/35 20%

The assessment results indicate that 66 to 80% of the students met or exceeded the learning expectation that students would score a 4 or higher on the Information Literacy assignment. According to the psychology faculty member who is involved in the assessment efforts, assessing Information Literacy has had an impact on the amount of emphasis placed on Information Literacy in the introductory psychology courses. Expanding the assignment to include a short presentation of the distinction between scholarly and popular sources, as well as examples in class, will be done in future semesters.

The Information Literacy assessment committee began Fall 2018 with a plan to finish a second round of assessment before December 2018. Since the first round of assessment revealed there was not inter-rater reliability for two of the rubric elements, Learning Objectives 2 and 4, the committee started more refining and calibration. ENGL 122 papers in the Spring 2017 collection that were not utilized for assessment purposes were used to refine the rubric on Objectives 2 and 4.

Information Literacy Learning Objectives Rubric and Score Sheet
Project Title: _____

Learning Objective Learners should be able to:	"No" Not Evidenced 0	"Yes, but" Demonstrates Emerging Understanding 1	"Yes" Demonstrates Competency 2	"Yes, and" Demonstrates Mastery 3	Score
1. determine an appropriate scope of investigation;	Thesis is outside of assignment scope	Thesis is within assignment scope, but project strays from thesis scope	Thesis and project both match assignment scope	Thesis and project both match assignment scope, additional avenues of investigation are proposed	
2. match information needs and search strategies to appropriate search tools;	Does not incorporate information resources	Incorporates sources, but no evidence of tools beyond basic web search	Incorporates sources from the following tools: library databases and internet search engines	Incorporates information from research tools including three or more appropriate formats	
3. use research tools and indicators of authority to determine the credibility of sources, understanding the elements that might temper this credibility;	Not supported by credible sources	Supported by few sources of credibility	Supported by a majority of credible sources	Uses a majority of credible sources and addresses elements that may temper credibility.	
4. synthesize ideas gathered from multiple sources and draw reasonable conclusions based on the analysis and interpretation of information sources;	Lacking supported conclusion or analysis	Conclusion present, but not consistently supported by sources	Conclusion supported by multiple sources	Conclusion supported by rational interpretation and analysis of sources. Addresses counter arguments.	
5. give credit to the original ideas of others through proper attribution and citation.	Sources not cited	Attempt at attribution or citation with significant formatting errors	Consistent attribution and citation with minor errors	Attribution and citation consistent with project requirements	

As with the first round of assessment, the workgroup capitalized on the papers collected for the most recent Written Communication assessment, which were student papers collected from the College's Spring 2018 ENGL 122, Rhetoric and Composition II, course sections. It should be noted that the Spring 2018 data will not reflect the improvements that were implemented in Fall 2018. The analysis for the second round of Information Literacy assessment is expected to be completed in Spring 2019. This information will be shared with faculty prior to the HLC Focused Visit. It is anticipated that, as the artifacts for Written Communication become

more representative of the general education courses and all of the programs in all degrees, the Information Literacy artifacts will be broadened similarly.

Institutional Outcomes Summary:

As explained in this section, all five of the General Education Institutional Outcomes will have collected at least two years of data prior to the HLC Focused Visit in April 2019. The systematic process that has been implemented to collect, analyze, share, create and implement improvement strategies is comprehensive and faculty-driven.

Each of the five subgroups that are involved in Institutional Outcome assessment are comprised primarily of faculty members. Faculty representatives from each of these subgroups now serve on the General Education Assessment Committee along with the four division Deans, the Director of Institutional Research, and the EVP (Appendix G. General Education Assessment Committee Members). This group has met regularly since January 2018 to provide updates and implementation strategies for the Institutional Outcomes. The dedication and commitment of this group has provided the impetus for the College to develop and implement a thorough process for the assessment of student learning for general education. In addition to collecting data for all five of the Institutional Outcomes, the data results have been shared with faculty and utilized to improve student outcomes. Additionally, the Written and Oral Communication groups have begun to evaluate the assessment process that has been utilized over the past several years by rethinking the rubrics, the courses from which artifacts will be pulled, and the implementation of improvement strategies. All five areas have taken steps to ensure that the process is inclusive of all students including dual credit and programs in all degrees. Furthermore, the Gen. Ed. Assessment Committee has created a three-year assessment rotation cycle for the assessment of the general education Institutional Outcomes.

General Education Institutional Outcomes
Rotation Cycle

Fiscal Year	Outcome/External Tools	Outcome/Internal Tools
2019	Critical Thinking & Quantitative Literacy	*Oral Communication (Pull artifacts in fall)
2020	Critical Thinking OR Quantitative Literacy (TBD based on data from 2019)	*Written Communication (Pull artifacts in spring)
**2021	CCSSE	Information Literacy (same as Written; pull in spring)
2022	Critical Thinking OR Quantitative Literacy (TBD based on which is selected in 2020)	Oral Communication (Pull artifacts in fall)
2023	Critical Thinking OR Quantitative Literacy (Whichever one is not selected in 2022)	Written Communication (Pull artifacts in spring)
2024	CCSSE	Information Literacy (same as Written; pull in spring)

*Oral and Written Communication currently reviewing where to pull artifacts
**Rotation Cycle to be reviewed in 2021 after cycle has been completed

Not only will this rotation cycle systemize the process, it will ensure that ample time is allowed for analysis, identification and implementation of improvement strategies before the next round of assessment begins.

Evidence Required:

Development and implementation of a systematic and regular assessment plan for all outcomes within each program. The College should provide clear evidence of the regular review of data and use of data for program improvement. There should be at least two years of data collection and follow-up evident for programs;

The development of program outcomes in Fall of 2017 was addressed under Core Component 3.A. This work provided the foundation for the assessment of student learning outcomes for all programs which began in Spring 2018. In an effort to provide additional guidance related to the assessment of program and Institutional Outcomes, Dr. Michael Boyd, an HLC Peer Reviewer and HLC Academy Mentor, presented a Program Assessment Workshop for faculty at the Spring 2018 Opening Days In-service. In his presentation, Dr. Boyd reframed assessment around "values."

Why do our "values" matter?

An effective assessment process is meaningful and purposeful.

An effective assessment process will only be meaningful and purposeful if it is built in alignment with those values which drive your practice.

Key Insight – Build a values-based theoretical/philosophical foundation which can endure iterations of "assessment plans."

Boyd Presentation, Slide 7

He also addressed the concerns brought forth in the HLC Action Letter regarding Highland being put on Notice and discussed the processes that would be necessary to alleviate HLC's concerns. Faculty were given an opportunity to ask him questions, which helped provide clarification and address their fears of being on Notice.

At this point, it was recognized that to effectively implement program level assessment, faculty would need to identify a tool for program assessment and the course(s) within their program where the tool would be utilized. Although several program areas had done Curriculum Mapping, engaging all faculty in Curriculum Mapping seemed to be the logical next step. Not

only would Curriculum Mapping help determine where the highest level of mastery of course outcomes was demonstrated, it would also help identify where gaps in the curriculum might be occurring and align program goals with required courses in the program. To this end, in addition to Dr. Boyd's workshop, much of the Spring 2018 Opening Days In-service focused on Curriculum Mapping.

As the PowerPoint slides from the assessment session of Opening Days indicate, faculty were reminded of the purpose of Curriculum Mapping, introduced to Highland's modified version of a Curriculum Mapping tool (Appendix S. Program Outcomes Map_2.1), and led through the application of the tool.

Highland Community College

Application

Curriculum Map should help you identify the course(s) where highest level of skill/concept is obtained.

This is where you target program level assessment.

Faculty were given work time to begin filling out their curriculum maps, determine where the highest skill levels were being achieved within the program, and verify that all program outcomes were being addressed throughout the curriculum. Faculty who teach general education courses (i.e. Humanities, Social Science, Fine Arts) were directed to map their

courses to the five general education Institutional Outcomes. Samples of program curriculum maps can be found in Appendix T1-T8. Once determined, faculty were asked to identify the tool that would be most appropriate to assess program level outcomes. Having already completed a couple of cycles of course level assessment, faculty were quickly able to identify potential assessment methods and tools that would be suitable for their program.

The form to document course level assessment was modified slightly to better reflect program level assessment and clearly document the assessment of all program outcomes.

Assessment Form:

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING REPORT FORM

Contact Person:		Reporting Semester:	
Division:		Discipline/Program:	

Assessment Plan:
Identify Program Outcomes to be assessed:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Identify type of assessment:

☐ Course/Discipline (assessment within one course or all sections of the same course)

☒ Degree/Program (for core competencies across courses that make up a degree)

☐ Institutional (core competencies across all degrees)

Identify the class(es) that will participate in this assessment activity:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Since the assessment form was familiar to faculty, they were able to adapt and utilize it for program level assessment. It was determined that all program outcomes would be assessed

years one to three to establish benchmark data. After year three of the cycle, there will be enough data available for the Assessment Mentors and faculty to analyze trends and determine if a different cycle format is more appropriate. The program outcomes assessment cycle can be seen below:

Program Outcomes Rotation Cycle

Fiscal Year	Program Outcomes
2018	Assess all Program Outcomes
2019	Assess all Program Outcomes
2020	Assess all Program Outcomes
2021	Re-evaluate Assessment Cycle & Analyze Trend Data

Faculty were instructed to assess all program outcomes, complete the assessment plan form for their program(s) and identify a program level assessment tool by midterm (March 16, 2018). Samples of completed assessment forms can be found in Appendix U1-U6.

As the assessment work continued to scale up, it became clear that the review of course and program assessment plans and the accompanying feedback should not be restricted to the office of the Executive Vice President/Chief Academic Officer as it had been to this point. Although the division deans were responsible for collecting the information, the review and feedback of the plans was primarily being done by one administrator. While this structure had been efficient for the launch of the course level assessment effort, it was lacking for several reasons. First, as the work was scaling up, it was becoming increasingly more difficult for feedback to be provided to faculty in a timely manner. Of more significance, faculty were not involved in the process. It was clear that for the assessment of student learning to be a faculty-driven process, faculty needed to be involved at all stages of the effort. Thus, the idea for faculty assessment mentors was explored and implemented.

In January 2018, the Accreditation Committee began discussing how faculty could be included in the feedback process. Since Highland's faculty contract includes provisions for a differential to be awarded to faculty for work that is outside the scope of their teaching assignment (i.e., Director of Honors Program, Faculty Senate President), it was agreed that a differential for Assessment Mentor would be proposed. In collaboration with the deans, Faculty Senate, and faculty representatives on the Accreditation Committee, a proposal was drafted for the President's review. The proposal was then sent to the Board for their consideration and approved on May 15, 2018. The role and responsibilities of the Assessment Mentor are clearly described in the differential.

Assessment Mentor Differential Faculty Proposal
April 11, 2018

Position Description and Duties

The position of Assessment Mentor is critical to the assessment effort as it promotes faculty ownership of and input into the assessment process.

In addition to the duties required of an HCC faculty member, the Assessment Mentor(s) will be responsible for:

- Working closely with the Executive Vice President, the Division Deans, the Accreditation Committee, and the Gen. Ed. Assessment Committee to promote and support the assessment of student learning
- Working closely with the faculty to provide explanation, feedback, and best practices to facilitate the assessment of student learning
- Contributing to the development of an articulated assessment process for course and program level assessment
- Contributing to the development of an Assessment Handbook
- Remaining current on research and best practices in assessment of student learning via regular professional development at a minimum of once a year
- On a regular basis, assisting in evaluating the success of the course and program level assessment process
- Creating and reviewing an assessment feedback form that can be utilized for course and program level assessment

Selection

The Executive Vice President, with consultation of the appropriate Division Dean, will appoint interested and qualified faculty member(s) (no more than one per division) to be an Assessment Mentor. The Assessment Mentor is a full-time faculty member. This appointment will be a one-year appointment, eligible for renewal each year.

Rationale

These duties are deemed to be essential to the development and success of the assessment of student learning. Migrating the assessment feedback from the EVP to the faculty promotes the faculty-driven culture that is critical to the long-term success of the assessment effort.

The Assessment Mentor will report to the Division Dean/immediate supervisor.

Timeline

Due to the timeline associated with assessment due dates, the timeline for the differential would begin at 10th day of the Fall and Spring semester and be completed when feedback for the semester is completed, not to exceed three weeks after the semester ends.

Compensation Recommendation

Based on the afore-mentioned duties, which are performed along with teaching responsibilities of a full-time faculty member, the compensation proposed shall be three credit hours release time each semester or three hours of overload each semester. The Assessment Mentor will be allowed to decide if compensation takes the form of release time or overload in any given semester. The Assessment Mentor will have the option of performing the administrative duties during the summer schedule. In this case, the Assessment Mentor will receive one hour of summer pay for the summer term in addition to regular summer pay compensation for classes taught in the summer.

Recognizing the importance of immediately involving faculty in the feedback process, as the differential proposal was moving through the approval process in Spring 2018, four faculty Assessment Mentors representing each of the four academic divisions were identified. The

faculty identified to serve in this capacity included a trained HLC Peer Reviewer, two faculty members who had attended the HLC General Education Assessment Workshop, and a nursing faculty member who had served as Medical Staff Quality Specialist for 13 years prior to becoming a faculty member at Highland. Working directly with the EVP, the Assessment Mentors created a feedback review process, which was piloted in March 2018. The review and subsequent feedback included the program assessment plans, the course assessment plans, and the curriculum maps which were collected from each program.

Working in pairs, the Assessment Mentors reviewed the assessment plans from their division and one other division on campus. The mentors were intentionally paired so that a career technology faculty member and a general education faculty member were working together. This pairing allowed the mentors to provide feedback on a wider range of assessment approaches and to better understand the assessment effort campus-wide. After reviewing the assessment in pairs, the four Assessment Mentors met to discuss feedback responses and develop a consistent feedback format. In addition to providing the feedback in writing to each individual faculty member, the Assessment Mentors followed up with the faculty members in their division to provide clarification, suggestions, and support. At the end of the semester, this same process was followed to provide feedback regarding the assessment results and analysis. The feedback was primarily focused on whether or not faculty had identified and documented curriculum changes that would occur based on the assessment results.

Prior to providing feedback for the next cycle of assessment, in Fall 2018 the Assessment Mentors met and reviewed the process with the EVP. At this time, a more streamlined process for returning the feedback to the faculty was identified. It was also recognized that faculty preferred to receive more detailed feedback and direction regarding the changes being suggested. Furthermore, a more systematic timeline for collection, review, and feedback was developed and embedded in the assessment process timeline (Appendix V. Assessment Timeline).

Since program outcome assessment was initially collected by most programs in Spring 2018, at the time of this writing, not all programs have had an opportunity to implement improvements and test the results. However, there are examples where improvement strategies have already been implemented. For instance, based upon assessment findings and other key factors, the math faculty have increased the credit hours of the MATH 177, Statistics, course from three credit hours to four credit hours.

Math faculty have made a significant change to MATH 177, Statistics, which is a course that is frequently taken by students to fulfill the General Education Core Curriculum requirement for the Associate of Arts (AA) degree program. The assessment data collected over a two-year period indicated that students were struggling to meet the established competencies of the course. In Spring 2017, four of the seven competencies that were assessed in Math 177 for the AA program did not meet the benchmark (80% of students scoring 70% or higher). In Spring 2018, all eight of the competencies that were assessed in Math 177 for the AA program did not meet the benchmark. Additionally, six other competencies that were assessed at the course level (for all students) did not meet the benchmark. In Fall 2018, four of the eight competencies that were assessed in Math 177 for the AA program did not meet the benchmark. Seven of the eight assessed competencies for the AA students were the same in each semester.

As faculty reflected on the assessment data, they also took into consideration the fact that students often commented that the course moves too fast. Faculty who teach the class have struggled to cover the required topics and recognized when they completed a credit hour audit of the course that it typically surpassed the 3.0 mark. Furthermore, the course description was modified by the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI) Math Panel in Summer/Fall 2018 which required a need to add/expand at least three topics. These factors combined prompted the math faculty to recommend that the credit hours for the course be increased from three to four. This recommendation was considered and approved by the Curriculum & Instruction Committee and the Board of Trustees prior to its submission for approval to the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB). The course credit hour change will take effect Fall 2019.

The nursing faculty have also implemented a significant programmatic change based upon their assessment findings. The NURS 296 course, Physical Assessment for Nurses, has been changed from an elective course to a required course. Prior to Fall 2018, NURS 296, Physical Assessment for Nurses, was an elective course. This course was a very popular elective. The faculty noted that when a student struggled in the first semester of the nursing program while taking NURS 191 and NURS 193, when they took NURS 296 as an elective, their subsequent progress was improved. On average, students improved their grades from a "C average" to a "B average." Given the large improvement in students' grades, the faculty of the Division of Nursing and Allied Health adopted the course as a required curriculum standard for the subsequent cohorts admitted in 2018 and beyond. Tracking of grades, retention, and success will continue after the change with graduation results available in 2020. The faculty hypothesize that a marked improvement will be seen overall in the retention of students throughout the program. An additional measure can be seen in the clinical evaluation of each subsequent course.

Nursing faculty also found, based on NCLEX results, HCC nursing students struggled with laboratory and diagnostic testing as well as pharmacology. As a result, changes to courses throughout the curriculum were made as follows:

1. In Health & Illness II, each exam contains two to five dosage calculation questions as well as pharmacology questions.
2. In Health & Illness III, each exam contains two to five laboratory and diagnostic questions. This encourages students to maintain a continuous review and knowledge of these topics.
3. Dosage calculation tests are administered in each medical-surgical course in which the students must earn an 80% or higher before attending clinical each semester.
4. The Leadership course Kaplan exams were adjusted from the Secure Predictor A and B version to Kaplan Medical-Surgical Comprehensive, Kaplan Pharmacology, and Kaplan Secure Predictor A. This provides the students with a better idea of their pharmacology knowledge and need to improve prior to NCLEX. The results are incorporated into a student devised plan to prepare for a top score on the Kaplan Secure Predictor, as well as NCLEX.

More examples of the use of data to inform program improvements will be available to share during the HLC Focused Visit. Most of the program assessment occurs during the final (spring) semester of the program. Thus, submission deadlines have been modified for Spring 2019 so

that faculty will have completed two program assessment cycles by the time of the HLC Focused Visit April 29, 2019.

Additional Evidence: Student Services and Co-Curricular Activities

In addition to continuing the systematic assessment of Oral and Written Communication and implementing the assessment of Information Literacy, Critical Thinking, Quantitative Literacy, and program assessment, the institution recognized the impending need to assess student services and co-curricular activities. While this assessment was not mentioned specifically in the HLC Action Letter, its importance to and connection with the assessment of student learning prompted the launch of this effort.

After learning about Lincoln Land Community College's assessment process a couple of years ago, the Highland student services team began utilizing the same organizational effectiveness model outlined by Savannah Heilman and Lance Kennedy-Phillips in the article *Making Assessment Easier With the Organizational Effectiveness Model* (2011). The model follows several steps including identifying departmental major activities, expected outcomes, and performance indicators. Highland's use of the model was modified after additional training was received on the SMART goal process at an HLC Conference in the spring of 2017. Smart goal writing helped the team develop improved metrics. Examples of the initial SMART goals are included below.

Athletics

GOAL – Increase student athletes attending Highland and participating in at least one athletic program

In FY18, the number of student athletes will increase by 10% over FY17.

Measure – Total number of student athletes in FY18 compared to FY17 as determined by roster, eligibility forms.

Possible other outcome related to credit hours.

First Year Experience (FYES) /Tutoring

GOAL – Increase student awareness and use of Success Center services.
By September 30, 2017, 85% of all FYES students will identify three services provided by Success Center staff.

Measure – Add item on campus tour to identify three specific services provided. Identify/name the staff member who answered the question.

The assessment process evolved again after the chief student services officer (CSSO) and career services coordinator attended the American College Personnel Association (APCA) Student Affairs Assessment Institute in the summer of 2018. The emphasis of this institute was on student learning outcomes and assessment in student affairs or student development units.

The Highland team has been able to incorporate most of the previous work under the organizational effectiveness model and the SMART goals approach into this learning outcomes approach to assessment. The student services division recognizes that it facilitates and contributes to student learning, while also focusing on providing quality services in a wide range of operational functions. In addition to student learning outcomes, the division is also identifying operational domains, outcomes, and goals within the assessment process.

Because co-curricular activities are led by Highland faculty and staff, a Student Activities Council consisting of faculty, staff and students provides input and feedback on student activities and co-curricular functions. Conversations about co-curricular assessment with the Student Activities Council also identified a need for clear student development learning outcomes that supported or augmented the College general education outcomes. At that point, the Student Services division followed a process of identifying additional learning domains that more clearly expressed the outcomes of the programs in the division, as well as co-curricular programming. These domains and division learning outcomes include:

Personal Competency *(adaptability, persistence, and resilience)*

Students should be able to:
- Assess their academic and personal needs and be aware of resources.
- Self-advocate and exercise their rights.
- Understand expectations and exercise sound judgement through planning and preparation.
- Learn techniques for managing emotions and resolving conflict in healthy ways.
- Understand the importance of taking responsibility for their actions.
- Develop decision-making and problem solving skills.
- Develop healthy and respectful relationships with others.

Identity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Students should be able to:
- Articulate how personal identities relate to larger social constructs.
- Share their identity within the community.
- Interact with others that they perceive to be different than their identity.
- Utilize empathy to communicate within the community.
- Celebrate the diversity of the people in their community.

Leadership Development

Students should be able to:
- Articulate the direct and transferrable skills they are developing that will be applied to future careers.
- Demonstrate effective career search and career decision making skills.
- Apply foundational behaviors encompassed in Servant Leadership.
- Demonstrate skill in guiding and assisting a group in meeting its goals
- Communicate a vision, mission, or purpose that encourages commitment and action in others.

- Develop life skills, academic skills, and skills to maintain health and well-being.

Community Engagement

Students should be able to:
- Identify where they can contribute, excel, and take steps toward engaging their community.
- Appreciate the impact of civic engagement in their community.
- Apply civility in relationships and group interactions.
- Apply skills learned to opportunities for community and campus engagement through experiential and service learning.

In addition, the team identified outcomes in the general education domains that have clear connections with the learning opportunities provided in the student services division including the following:

General Education Institutional Outcomes:

Information Literacy
Students should be able to:
- Develop skills in locating and effectively using information and resources that help them achieve their goals.

Oral Communication

Students should be able to:
- Apply communication skills to interactions with staff.

Once the learning domains were established, the departments began to identify a minimum of three learning and/or operational/service outcomes in their programs and services. Staff have been working to focus their learning assessment effort on the experiences offered to students that are designed to help them achieve the institution's general education or student services learning outcomes. Referred to as "learning experiences" these opportunities are intentionally focused on an identified outcome. Within the student services division, they are being considered similar to course level assessment. The operational outcomes are focused on institutional or student service functions that are still integral to supporting or improving the student experiences, such as the recruitment of student athletes or the administration and analysis of a student engagement survey. Examples in Figure 9 from the learning outcomes matrix and Figure 10 from the service outcomes matrix illustrate how the domains and outcomes align.

Figure 9. Examples from the Learning Outcomes Matrix.

	Learning Experience #1: Early Alert	Learning Experience #16: By-stander Intervention and Sexual Communication Program	Learning Experience #6: Experiential Learning Opportunities
Personal Competency *(adaptability, persistence, and resilience)* *Students should be able to:* • Assess their academic and personal needs and be aware of resources. • Self-advocate and exercise their rights. • Understand expectations and exercise sound judgement through planning and preparation. • Learn techniques for managing emotions and resolving conflict in healthy ways. • Understand the importance of taking responsibility for their actions. • Develop decision-making, and problem solving skills. • Develop healthy and respectful relationships with others. • Develop life skills, academic skills, and skills to maintain health and well-being.	• 70% of referred students will understand the purpose of the early alert program and be able to identify the resources the college has available to students who may be struggling in a class.	60% of the students attending the Speaking of Sex program will be able to describe a behavioral change they intend to make based on the new information	• SWBAT to identify and develop transferable and job specific skills through participation in experiential education.

Figure 10. Example from the Service Outcomes Matrix

	Athletic Department Outcome:
Recruitment of Prospective Students ᐧ Enhance academic and extra-curricular programs with qualified students	• In FY18, the number of student athletes will increase by 10% over FY17.

One of the team's goals is to have each department practice using a direct assessment method in addition to the indirect, and more common, use of surveys and focus groups in previous assessment activities. It was also agreed that only one of the three assessment plans in each department can be a "counting" or reach assessment (for example, counting numbers of students in attendance at a learning experience). The departments are currently finalizing their assessment methods and/or collecting data.

In an effort to align the co-curricular assessment process with the assessment process already familiar to the HCC faculty, forms used in the assessment of academic programs and courses have been adapted to meet co-curricular needs. The familiarity of the format should help the College adapt to co-curricular assessment expectations more rapidly. Figure 11 is an assessment form completed for learning experience #16.

Figure 11. Assessment of Student Learning Report Form

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING REPORT FORM for Student Services

Contact Person: Liz G / Stacey M

Reporting Semester: Fall, 2018

Division: Student Services

Program or Co-curricular: Program

Name of Program or Co-Curricular: GTC-Speaking of Sex- Bystander intervention and sexual communication

Assessment Plan:
Learning Domain (general education or student services domain):
- Personal Competency
- Critical Thinking

Identify Learning Outcome(s) to be assessed:
Develop healthy and respectful relationships

Program outcome:
Indicate the expected outcomes of this assessment activity and the criteria for success. (Example: (NEED TO PROVIDE ONE RELEVANT TO SS.) 80% of the students will score 75% or better on the oral presentation using the oral communication rubric.)
- 60% of the students attending the Speaking of Sex program will be able to describe a behavioral change they intend to make based on the new information
- 80% of the students attending the Speaking of Sex program will be able to articulate a change in their thinking about healthy relationships and sexual communication

Identify area of assessment:
☒ Student development programming (assessment within one learning experience, workshop, program)

☐ Student services operational goals supporting student development

☐ Co-curricular (for competencies developed in clubs, athletics, and programs designed to enhance learning in degree and certificate programs)

☐ Institutional (supporting core competencies across all degrees)

Identify the group that will participate in this assessment activity:
Participants included FYES classes and other students

Identify the mode of delivery for the experience: Check all that apply.
☒ Face to Face
☐ Hybrid
☐ Online
☐ Travel/ Off-campus Experience
☐ Competition
☐ Group Activity
☐ One-on-one Interaction
☐ Other:_____

Existing Data:
What existing data can be used in your assessment or can be used to triangulate data?

Assessment Method:
Describe the student learning assessment activity:

Feedback Form

Explain how student learning was evaluated. Provide the following:
- Evaluation tool or instrument used to assess student work (Attach)
- Data Collected (Attach or provide summary):
  - 42 feedback forms were completed. 32 students (76%) stated they will make a change to their behavior and approach.
  - 42 feedback forms were completed. 37 students (88%) stated this program helped them think differently.

Summary of Assessment Results
Identify the number of students who achieved each level for each learning outcome used in your assessment. Additional charts and graphs may be attached if desired.

Learning Outcome	Exceeds	Meets	Developing	Non-Existent
Personal Competency	21	7	5	9
Critical Thinking	23	13	5	1

How did the results compare to the Benchmark?
If applicable, describe any differences in student learning outcomes depending on mode of delivery.

The results were much higher than anticipated.

Reflection and Recommendations:
1. Based upon the results, what did you learn about student performance, experience, or learning?

This program really got through to the students and they learned how to change a behavior or thinking, when it comes to sexual communication with others.

2. How can the results be used to improve planning, teaching, and learning?

Try to get more students interested and involved, based on the other students feedback.

3. What changes, if any, will be made in the program or experience based upon these results?

Have instructors build it into their rubrics for the Fall semester, so all students on campus have the chance to be in attendance.

Describe these changes, the timeline for implementing these changes, and the method for assessing the impact of the change(s).

Closing the Loop:
Describe how the changes indicated above impacted student learning.

Figure 12 is the assessment form that was completed for an operational effectiveness outcome. In this case it is for the College's Homecoming 2018. The division is assessing the use of the form for operational effectiveness outcomes and anticipates making further adaptations.

Figure 12.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING REPORT FORM for Operations

Contact Person: Leslie Schmidt   Reporting Semester: Fall 2018

Division: Marketing   Program or Operation: Program

Name of Program or Operation: Homecoming 2018

Assessment Plan:
Operational Domain:

Community Engagement

Identify Department Outcome(s) to be assessed:

Connection to campus

Department Outcome:
Indicate the expected outcomes of this assessment activity and the criteria for success. (Example:
(NEED TO PROVIDE ONE RELEVANT TO SS.) 80% of the students will score 75% or better on the oral
presentation using the oral communication rubric.)

Identify area of assessment:
☐ Student development programming (assessment within one learning experience, workshop, program)

☒ Student services operational goals supporting student development

☐ Co-curricular (for competencies developed in clubs, athletics, and programs designed to enhance learning
in degree and certificate programs)

☐ Institutional (supporting core competencies across all degrees)

Identify the group that will participate in this assessment activity:
Staff and students

Identify the mode of delivery for the experience: Check all that apply.
☒ Face to Face
☐ Hybrid
☐ Online
☐ Travel/ Off-campus Experience
☐ Competition
☒ Group Activity
☐ One-on-one Interaction
☐ Other:_____

Existing Data:
What existing data can be used in your assessment or can be used to triangulate data?
Last year, 2017, we only gave away 250 meals during our pre-game party. This year, 2018, we
gave away 290. Therefore, we can see a rise in attendance for the pre-game party.

Assessment Method:
Describe the department outcome assessment activity:

Physical data on number of meals given away
Post homecoming-feedback survey

Explain how the outcome was evaluated. Provide the following:
• Evaluation tool or instrument used to assess work (Attach)
• Data Collected (Attach or provide summary):

Summary of Assessment Results
Identify the number of ==students== who achieved each level for each department outcome used in your assessment. Additional charts and graphs may be attached if desired.

Dept. Outcome	Exceeds	Meets	Developing	Non-Existent

How did the results compare to the department outcome?
If applicable, describe any differences in student learning outcomes depending on mode of delivery.

Reflection and Recommendations:
1. Based upon the results, what did you learn about student performance, experience, or learning?

2. How can the results be used to improve planning, teaching, and learning?

3. What changes, if any, will be made in the program or experience based upon these results?

Describe these changes, the timeline for implementing these changes, and the method for assessing the impact of the change(s).

Closing the Loop:
Describe how the changes indicated above impacted student learning.

The next steps in student services and co-curricular assessment include finalizing the assessments that will be used, analyzing the data collected, and closing the loop to ensure reflection and continuous improvement. During the College's staff development event in the Spring of 2019, there was an assessment meeting for all student services staff. This meeting was intended to continue development of an assessment culture within the division. The first round of assessment data will be analyzed before the Spring 2019 HLC Focused Visit. This is a new experience; new skills are being developed in the student services division. In addition to improving the student experience and learning opportunities, the team has recognized the potential of the assessment process in helping the division prioritize work, communicate with intention about programs and services, and utilize more foresight in planning and program development.

Assessment Plan Summary:

As explained in this section, a systematic and regular assessment plan for all five Institutional Outcomes within general education has been developed and implemented as illustrated in the

General Education Rotation Cycle (Appendix W). Currently, a minimum of two years of data has been collected for Written Communication, Oral Communication, and Information Literacy. At the time of this writing, one year of data has been collected for Critical Thinking and Quantitative Literacy. The second year of data is scheduled to be collected by March 2019 and will have been analyzed to inform improvements by the time of the HLC Focused Visit in April 2019. Dual credit and all programs in all degrees have been accounted for in this process. The assessment results have been shared with faculty, discussed by faculty, and strategies for improving student outcomes have been identified by faculty and implemented across the curriculum. These efforts have been directed by faculty subgroups of the General Education Assessment Committee, which demonstrates that the process is both comprehensive and faculty-driven.

Furthermore, a systematic and regular assessment plan for all outcomes within each program has also been developed and implemented as illustrated in the Program Outcomes Rotation Cycle (Appendix X). The assessment plans, data, data analysis, and improvement goals are reviewed annually by the faculty member(s) and the Assessment Mentors who also provide feedback and suggestions for consideration. This data review culminates in the implementation of program improvements. The role of the Assessment Mentors in this process helps ensure that it is faculty-driven.

Highland's effort to fulfill HLC's expectations is evidenced by the significant progress that has been made in less than 18 months. At the time of this writing, one year of data has also been collected by each program. Since program level assessment is typically done in the final semester (usually spring) of a program, it seemed most effective to collect the second year's data after midterm, yet before the HLC Focused Visit. Therefore, by the time of the HLC Focused Visit on April 29-30, two years of data will have been collected and analyzed to inform program improvements.

In addition to the systematic assessment of academic programs, by its own initiative, Highland also developed and implemented the systematic assessment of student services and co-curricular activities. Data for these areas will be collected beginning Spring 2019. It, too, will be available by the time of the HLC Focused Visit in April.

Highland believes that the evidence provided here demonstrates HCC's "commitment to educational achievement and improving through the ongoing assessment of student learning," as stated in Core Component 4.B.   Highland's immediate action to address this concern by implementing a systematic and comprehensive assessment process, involving faculty in all aspects of the process, and utilizing the assessment results to improve student outcomes should eliminate the concern that Highland is at risk of being out of compliance for this criterion.

Core Component 4.C

The College meets Criterion Four, Core Component 4.C, "the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs," but with concerns because, while

the College collects and uses data on student academic achievement from various sources, anchored by metrics contained in the Illinois Community College Board's program review process, it was unable to articulate defined goals for retention and completion that would be reasonable and attainable.

Evidence Required:

Clear and defined targets for retention, graduation, and persistence and use of these data for intentional review of progress toward improvement targets;

To set targets for persistence, retention, and completion within the culture of shared governance, Highland decided to expand the Strategic Enrollment Management (SEM) Committee and incorporate the targets as part of a College-wide Strategic Enrollment Management Plan. In February 2018, a team of representatives from the SEM Committee attended a workshop sponsored by the Illinois Community College Chief Student Services Officers (ICCCSSO) and led by Christine Kerlin, senior consultant for American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO). The workshop provided a framework for the planning process as summarized below in Figure 13.

Figure 13
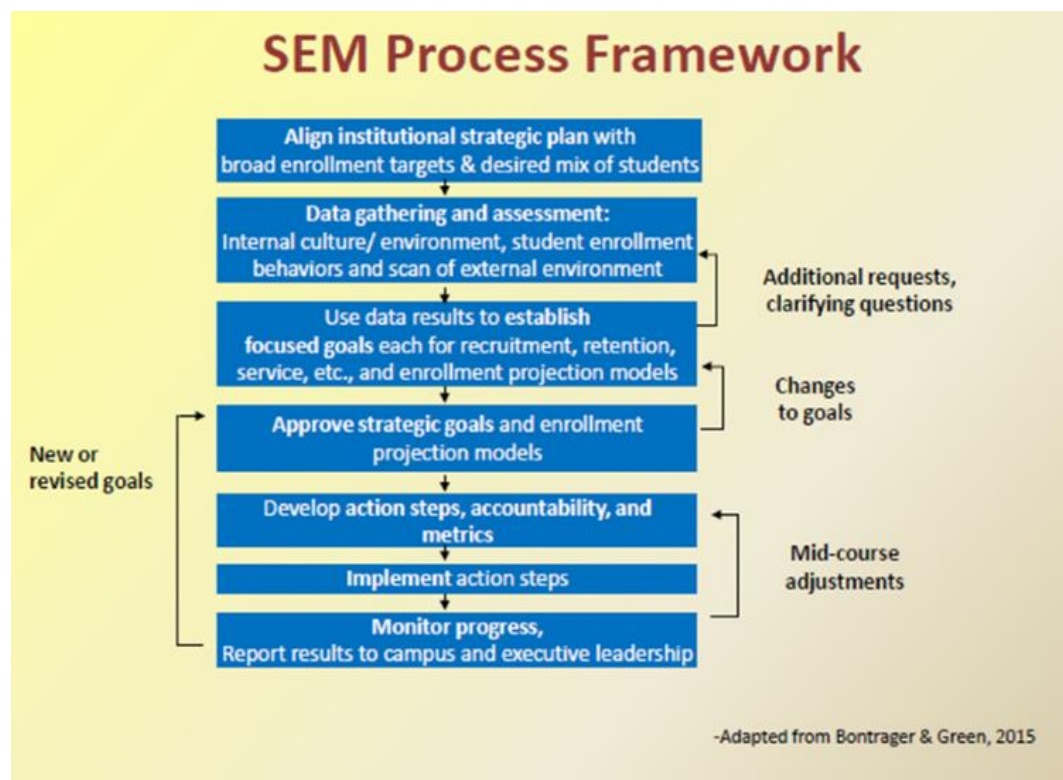
Source: Christine Kerlin, Ed.D., 2018

Acting upon discussions held during the workshop about the importance of developing an SEM ethos, the team expanded membership of the SEM Committee. The expanded group included additional faculty, as well as positions dealing with institutional and student finances (Appendix

Y. SEM Committee Members). A series of meetings was held culminating with a planning retreat on April 23, 2018 to set institutional targets for retention, persistence, and completion.

The first meeting was used to lay the foundation for the development of an SEM plan by sharing highlights from the workshop and providing the rest of the committee with the background information and SEM planning concepts. The planning steps were modified to take into account the strategic planning that was already completed and to ground the SEM process in the College's strategic plan.

In the second meeting, the group applied Kerlin's story-telling step to Highland's process. Kerlin encouraged institutions to transform data into stories that attract interest and help prioritize needs. The 24 stories shared were grounded in the strategic planning process SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis and included supporting data. These stories fell into five main categories including underrepresented students, non-traditional students, college readiness, schedule building, and retention in alternatively delivered courses. The group used an impact and effort matrix to help prioritize the identified issues (Figures 14 and 15). Prioritization was needed to help the group focus on three main goals, which was recommended by Kerlin.
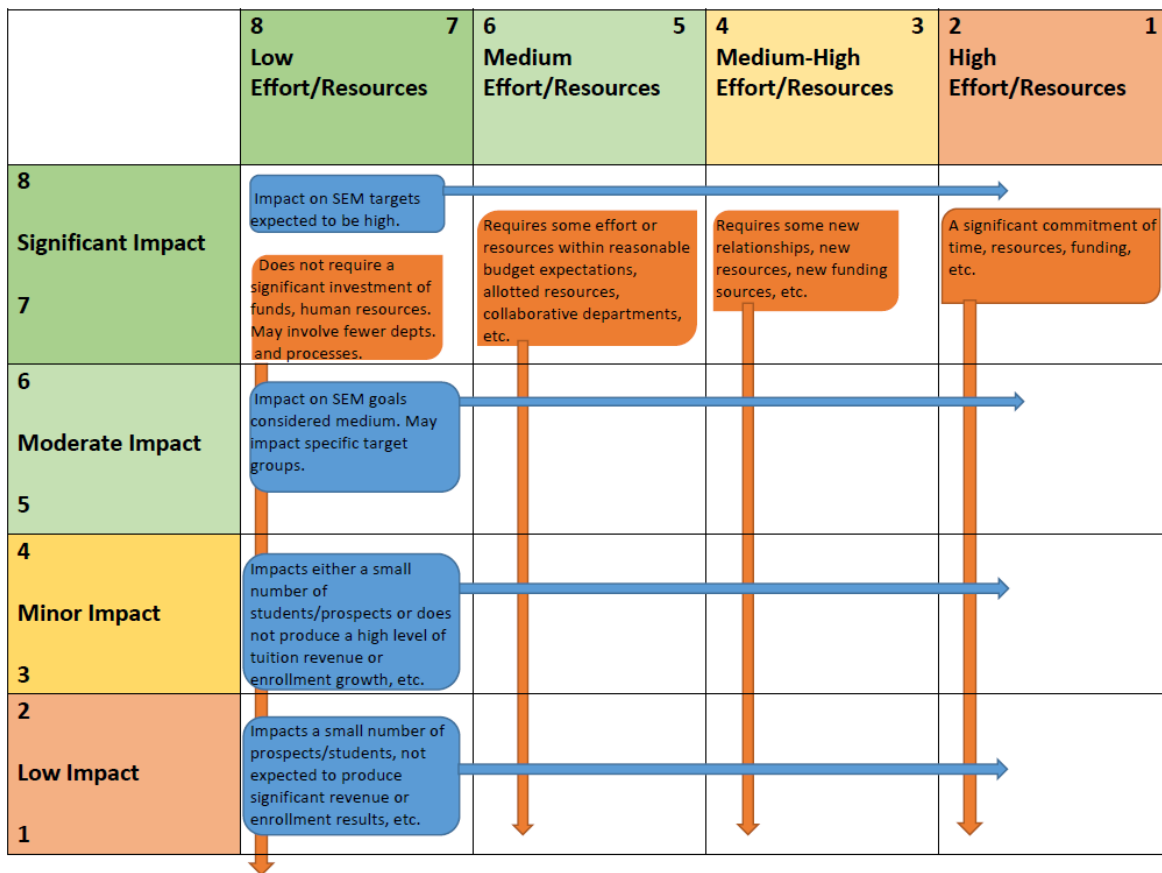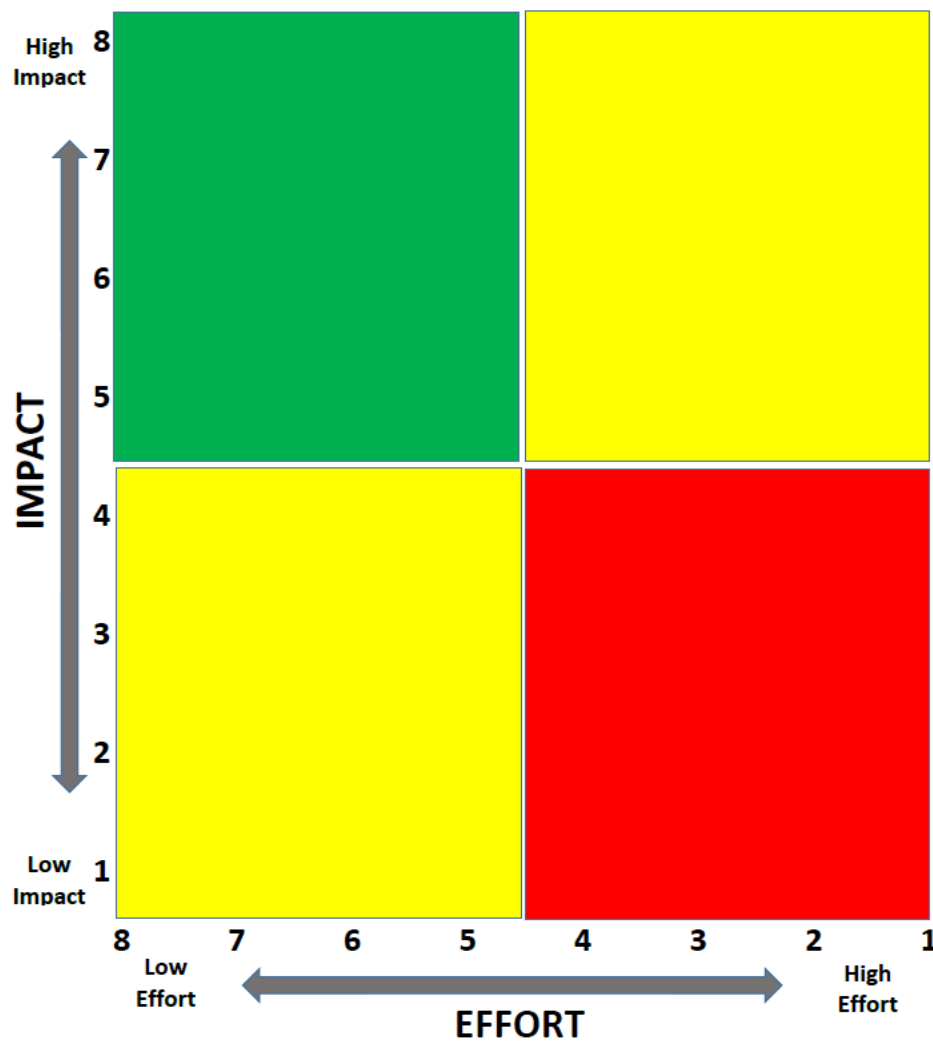
Figure 14.

Figure 15.

The group's next step was to identify targets for retention, persistence, and completion that would support the College's strategic plan, further focus the list of priorities, and provide a framework for reporting outcomes. To complete this task, the Institutional Research office provided fall benchmark data and forecasts using moving averages for 10th-day enrollment headcount, fall to fall retention, persistence, and completion. The presentation of moving averages is included in Appendix Z. SEM Moving Averages. During the April 23rd planning retreat, the group set targets and prioritized the issues that would later become the focus of the SEM plan which will be complete by April 2019. The SEM efforts were aimed at setting attainable yet challenging targets that would support the achievement of Highland's strategic plan. The SEM group will be reviewing the progress and reporting out the results for each target annually as the data becomes available and will reconfirm or set new targets on an annual basis.

The targets are as follows:

- Fall to Fall Retention, First-Time, Full-Time – 65%
- Fall to Fall Retention, First-Time, Part-Time – 40%
- Persistence – 30%
- Completion – 35%

The priorities identified are as follows:

- Retention: Student Engagement
- Retention: Alternative Delivery
- Retention: Financial Aid Warning and Termination Status

Significant time was set aside during the Fall 2018 Opening Days In-service attended by all faculty and staff to share the targets and gather more input on the priorities and strategies that would be needed to help the College reach the targets. The presentation used to inform the full faculty and staff and move them through a strategy development session is shared in Appendix AA. (SEM Opening Days Presentation Slides). Faculty and staff also received a sample of the stories that committee members submitted to illustrate key retention, persistence, and completion challenges (Appendix BB. SEM Story Summaries). The discussion groups generated 42 strategies identified as high impact (Appendix CC. SEM Matrix). The Strategic Enrollment Management Committee worked with this input to identify key strategies for implementation. The strategies selected include the following:

- Retention: Student Engagement
    1. Curricular pathways development
        o Scheduling review
    2. Improved utilization of student worker program
        o Faculty/student connections
        o Compensation. Ex: performance based, scholarships
    3. Environmental changes to the campus that support interaction
- Retention: Alternative Delivery
    1. Promote existing pathways
        o Including sequence classes
        o Consistent class schedules/times
        o Review and add support services for online students. Ex: time management, tutoring, early alert, ROAR midterm grades
        o Accelerated programs

- o Saturday classes Ex: 6 Sat. classes from 8:00-2:00
  2. Recruit more cohorts 2+2
  3. Package online/hybrid courses in a sequence to degree
- Retention: Financial Aid Warning & Termination Status Students
  1. Earlier Intervention
     - o Early Alert
     - o New text system
     - o Tutoring
     - o Caseloads in advising and other staff
  2. Embed within the FA presentations at First Year Experience Seminar

Although HLC expected the College to set targets for retention, graduation, and persistence, the College also recognized the importance of setting a recruitment target. Highland is located in a rural area with a population decline; adapting to the needs of the people we serve is critically important, along with retention, in establishing our enrollment. The committee followed a similar process used for setting retention, graduation, and persistence targets to set a recruitment target by using student enrollment data to identify focus areas. This included examining high school matriculation data, adult enrollment data, program areas, and the ethnicity trends of the student population. An example of the student enrollment data utilized in setting these targets is shown in Figure 16. Additional data and information utilized is contained in Appendix DD., which depicts the connection between HCC's credit and non-credit enrollment (See Appendix DD. All Enrollment_FY18 Update).

Figure 16.

Fall 2017 Enrollment Status by Age

Count

		Enrollment Status								
		First-time student in college-level coursework	New pre-college student	Transfer student	New general studies or vocational skills student	Continuing student	Returning student	Already possesses a degree beyond an Associate Degree	High school student	Total
Age Cat	16 and under	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	52	53
	17-20	249	0	16	0	383	0	1	261	910
	21-24	13	1	14	1	196	0	1	0	226
	25-30	12	0	8	0	122	1	7	0	150
	31-39	12	0	10	1	99	0	22	0	144
	40-55	4	0	7	2	89	0	28	0	130
	56 and over	3	0	0	10	27	2	23	0	65
Total		294	1	55	14	916	3	82	313	1678

The group consensus was to approve new student recruitment/enrollment targets for high school and adult students as follows:

- High School Target: 32% - raise by 1% = 9 more students

- Adult Target: 50 new and returning students - Raise by 28% = 11 more students than three year average

Information collected in recently administered engagement surveys will also be particularly useful in the further development of strategies intended to impact student engagement and retention. These surveys include the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), administered in Spring 2018 and the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE) in Fall 2018. The comparative data for participating community colleges will enhance HCC's ability to set benchmarks. The CCSSE and CCFSSE results were analyzed by a group of faculty with further presentation and discussion held for all faculty during the Spring 2019 Opening Days In-service.

During the Spring 2019 Semester Opening Days In-service, all faculty and staff were engaged in a second strategy-development session focused on the recruitment targets. Following a similar process, a faculty member and a staff member (both of whom are SEM Committee members) presented the new targets to all faculty and staff present for Opening Days. Once again, all 42 faculty and staff members present broke into small group discussion to develop ideas that would help the College reach the targets. They utilized the effort/impact matrix to help identify and prioritize strategies that would have a considerable impact on the recruitment target while being manageable and achievable for the institution. The SEM committee's next step is to identify a few key strategies to implement from the many ideas presented during Opening Days In-service.

For each identified strategy, the College will be utilizing the project management database to help identify metrics, document action steps and budget impacts, and monitor progress. More information is available in the next section regarding Core Component 5.D about the use of this database in improving accountability and the use of data in the intentional review of progress toward achieving these targets.

Kerlin's presentation affirmed that a component of successful SEM planning is the way in which the SEM plan interacts with the strategic plan and the other College-wide planning processes. The Core Component 5.D section of this document addresses more specifically how the planning processes interconnect.

Highland has followed an inclusive process for identifying clear and defined targets for retention, graduation, and persistence. Through the SEM committee planning retreat and the strategy-development sessions at Opening Days In-service, all faculty and staff have had opportunities to provide input and ask questions about the targets, the process for setting them, and the data that was used. The College has navigated a data-informed process for identifying targets and all faculty and staff have been engaged in the identification of intentional strategies that are included in a strategic enrollment management plan, currently in development, for the institution.

Additionally, the college set a target for traditional and non-traditional student recruitment. The SEM plan being developed, complements and supports the College strategic plan and was formulated from the SWOT analysis conducted as part of the institution's community-wide strategic planning process. Using the project management database, the expanded membership of the SEM committee will continue to monitor, intentionally review, and share progress of the SEM plan and performance against targets annually. Given this work, the College has demonstrated that it is not at risk for non-compliance with Core Component 4.C; furthermore, its actions demonstrate a renewed commitment to coordination and more focused actions across the institution.

Core Component 5.D

The College meets Criterion Five, Core Component 5.D, "the institution works systematically to improve its performance," but with concerns because the systematic and regular review of the institution's strategic planning process should better align with steps taken to improve operations and budgetary planning.

Evidence Required:

> *Development and implementation of a clear plan for intentionally using data in systematic review processes and for improvement of the student experience.*

As outlined in the 2017 Response to the Comprehensive Quality Review Team Report, the College has utilized a *Building Communities* model for strategic planning that incorporates significant input from the constituents it serves in setting institutional goals and in developing strategic initiatives. The last three strategic planning cycles have been reviewed and continuously improved in an effort to increase accountability, connect strategic planning and budgeting, and set appropriate operational timelines.

At mid-point of the previous cycle in 2012, for example, a feedback session was held with external and internal members of the planning council to consider new survey data, the College's progress in meeting the plan's goals, and changes they had observed in the environment since the plan was published. Similarly, prior to launching the most recent planning cycle in 2015, a meeting was held to gather input from faculty on the strategic planning process, timeline, and community involvement. The College places continued priority on engaging faculty, staff and other key constituent groups in the strategic plan. Updates are provided at Opening Days In-service events for faculty and staff, the Cabinet and Board of Trustees share updates at each meeting, and project champions are tasked with completing project management tools (See Appendix EE. Strategic Plan Opening Days Presentation Slides 2017-2022).

More recently, institutional improvements have centered on the need for additional long-range action planning and project management that will increase accountability and intentionally tie the College's planning efforts together. These actions will help the College create the impact

sought in the strategic plan. Furthermore, it will help address a need for increased accountability and effective management tools identified in analysis of the 2014 Personal Assessment of the College Environment (PACE) results. (The PACE is the College's climate survey that was also administered in 2011 and in Fall 2018. The PACE is designed to demonstrate that the institution's leadership motivates four climate factors that ultimately impact student success and institutional effectiveness. These climate factors are institutional structure, supervisory relationship, teamwork, and student focus.) Turning the goals into actionable steps, providing project management tools, ensuring accountability, and connecting the strategic planning and budgeting processes have all been strengthened. The College strategic plan identifies these areas through several key objectives including:

- Develop and implement project management tools to assist with defining a scope of work, particularly for strategic planning projects.
- Create evaluation plans to monitor the progress and ensure success of key projects.

To help achieve sustainable improvements, a project charter database was developed to guide project planning, identify measurable outcomes, connect the projects to the budgeting process, and document the various projects intended to help the College meet its strategic goals. For each project, the measurable outcomes, milestones, timeframes, risks and constraints, connections to the strategic plan and HLC core components, and budgetary aspects are considered. Sample completed project charters for the book adoption process and the CCSSE and CCFSSE administration are available in Appendix FF. Sample Completed Project Charters.

The database was built internally in Microsoft Access with support from the Core Cabinet, Academic Technology Resources, and faculty in the information technology area. Core Cabinet members identified projects that were underway or in the planning stages along with project champions and owners responsible for populating the database and managing the project. There are currently 34 projects documented.

Additionally, a crosswalk was developed to help faculty and staff understand the connections between HCC's strategic planning work and HLC Core Components. This tool illustrates the connections and acts as a guide for faculty and staff completing the project management database forms. A sample of this crosswalk is shown below (see Figure 17). The full crosswalk can be reviewed in Appendix GG. Strategic Plan Crosswalk

Figure 17.

2017 - 2022 **Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives with corresponding HLC Criterion**			
1. GOAL: Strengthen and expand high quality educational pathways for diverse student populations	2. GOAL: Enhance affordable and convenient access to educational opportunities	3. GOAL: Develop sustainable models to address student financial needs and challenges	4. GOAL: Expand and strengthen educational program offerings and modes of instructional delivery
OBJECTIVES:	OBJECTIVES:	OBJECTIVES:	OBJECTIVES:
HLC Crosswalk: 3D a.) Develop a matriculation pathway between high school and college level courses that aligns with secondary education and college readiness benchmarks.	*HLC Crosswalk: 5C & 5A1* a.) Develop a plan to expand capabilities and course offerings delivered through real-time interactive video systems and other related technologies as they become available.	*HLC Crosswalk: 3D & 5C4* a.) Maintain sustainability of Auxiliary Funds in order to benefit students with high quality extra-curricular and co-curricular experiences.	*HLC Crosswalk: 3A3 & 3C2, 4A & 4B1* a.) Increase and align instructional expectations, course offerings and instructional competencies in multi-instructional delivery formats including online and dual credit.

Monitoring progress on strategic planning projects is another area of improvement. At milestone points identified in the project charter, project champions or owners are asked to complete a progress report form, which is disseminated to and discussed with the Core Cabinet and the Board of Trustees. Minutes from the special Core Cabinet meeting on strategic planning summarize the process developed (Appendix HH. Special Core Cabinet Notes). Figure 18 below provides evidence of how the College is tracking progress. The project highlighted here addressed the college's book adoption process. Two additional sample progress reports are included in Appendix II.

Figure 18.
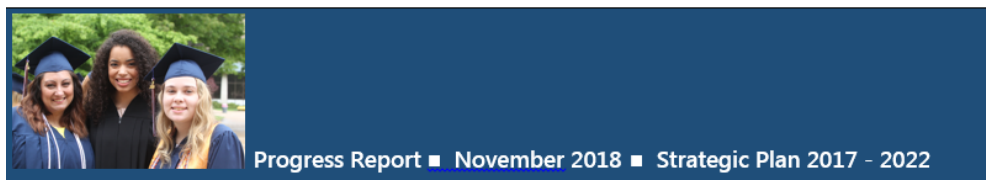
Book Adoption Process

1. *Were you able to overcome constraints?*

Yes, meetings were held in person or on the phone. We determined that, based on the amount of time this took, the process would be an every-other semester process.

2. *Have you been able to stay on budget?*

Madonna's time was the biggest resource utilized. She was very flexible with her time – meeting instructors when it was convenient for them.

3. *What are the accomplishments/milestones achieved to date?*

Madonna met with at least 80% of the College's 50 full-time instructors. In addition, she met with a large percent of the part-time instructors for the fall 2018 semester. As a result of the meetings, some of the following were implemented:

- Open Educational Resources are now being used in biology and physics (this effects at least 75 students per semester – their packages used to be $400 and are now $120).
- A custom lab manual was created for Anatomy and Physiology for one course without color to save costs – it was determined that the lack of color impacted the quality, so this will be changed next semester.
- Able to rent Intro to Criminal Justice textbooks rather than sell them out right – this impacts both regular HCC students and dual credit students (at least 80 students).
- Feedback from instructors was very positive. Many didn't realize the bookstore was College-owned, that the money stays here, and what it funds.
- Able to rent the Intro to Sociology textbook instead of having students purchase them outright.

4. *Are you on track to achieve the measurable outcomes?*

Faculty's awareness about the function of the bookstore is increased.

We'll know when we do buy-back after the fall semester if students report back that textbooks weren't used in class.

There are more options for textbook rentals.

5. *How do you know?*

Feedback obtained in meetings was very positive. Instructors who didn't used to communicate regularly with Madonna do now (makes a big difference). People feel more comfortable working on new/different ideas now that they have met Madonna in person.

Sales are about 44% of the budget for the year at this point in time for FY19. Last year, sales were 56% of total annual revenue. Part of the decrease is related to an enrollment decrease. The impact on net income will need to be determined – it's possible that the net income will be level as the cost of inventory should be less. This will be evaluated at the end of the Fall 2018 semester.

Student feedback is directly obtained during buy-back.

Madonna will do this again – instructors seem willing to do it again, as well.

6. *Optional - Other comments or written evidence related to this project.*
7. *Attach evidence (photos, charts, graphs) or provide the location where evidence is stored/documented.*

   Agenda of each meeting included: discussion of bookstore being college-owned, discussion of how much each instructor used the textbooks in their classes (Asked were assignments given or tests based on the reading? If not – she asked if info could be obtained elsewhere by students). Talked about open education resources (OER's) and other less-expensive options for materials.

The book adoption process also demonstrates how the college staff and faculty are using data in the systematic review of processes for improvement of the student experience. Revenue in the college-owned bookstore has been declining. In part, this is due to enrollment; however, increasing competition for book sales is also a factor. Combining the revenue position with an initiative to increase affordability prompted this project, which ties directly to two objectives in the College strategic plan:

- Utilize evaluation data to develop key improvement strategies and initiatives.
- Maintain sustainability of Auxiliary Funds in order to benefit students with high quality extra-curricular and co-curricular experiences.

In this project, the bookstore manager met with full-time and part-time faculty individually and in small groups to share information about the bookstore being college-owned and its contribution to the Auxiliary Funds. The discussion also included how much each instructor used the textbooks in their classes, whether or not assignments or tests were based on the reading, and where students might obtain information if they did not have the text. The manager and faculty members also discussed open education resources (OER's) and other less-expensive options for materials. In the progress report, the manager cited positive outcomes including the following:

- Open Educational Resources now being used in biology and physics affecting at least 75 students per semester. Their packages used to be $400 and are now $120, saving students $21,000 per semester.
- Intro to Criminal Justice textbooks are now available for rent rather than purchase, which impacts at least 80 college and dual credit students.
- Increased awareness that the College Bookstore is College-owned and funds student programming.
- Increased communication with instructors post-meeting.
- Intro to Sociology textbook now available for rent rather than purchase.

Clearly, this project was intentionally aimed at positively impacting the student experience by increasing the affordability of textbooks.

The revamping of the Protection, Health, and Safety (PHS) process serves as another example of taking a strategic objective from the development stage to the implementation stage which includes tying it to the operations and budget and developing measurable outcomes. In the strategic plan, the College recognizes the need to offer more opportunities for staff and faculty to work collaboratively and to utilize data when making decisions. Strategic objectives include the need to foster collaboration between academic and non-academic personnel and utilize evaluation data to develop key improvement strategies. These strategic objectives were created prior to HCC being put on Notice which attests to the fact that HCC was already aware of and attempting to address the utilization of data to review processes and improve the student experience prior to HLC requiring evidence of such.

In determining actions to take to achieve these strategic objectives, the College reviewed its process for identifying Protection, Health, and Safety (PHS) projects. PHS funds are local tax dollars, the use of which is governed by state law. In the past, these projects were determined by administration. In an effort to achieve the strategic objective of providing opportunities for collaboration, the PHS project selection process was changed to utilize a work group that included faculty, staff, and students. The initial work group worked together to identify, understand, prioritize and recommend PHS projects for FY2019. Projects with a direct link to the strategic plan were considered high priority.

The initial work group soon realized that two of the proposed projects were of such a complexity and had such a broad campus impact that two additional work groups should be created, with additional faculty, staff, student, and board member involvement. The projects identified and ultimately recommended are as follows: renovation of classroom M-120 to make it ADA accessible, construction of a solar photovoltaic array, upgrade of security camera servers, and replacement of interior fluorescent lighting. These projects also addressed the strategic objective to provide safe, comfortable, eco-friendly learning environments.

Data specific to each project was used in making decisions about implementation. The following are examples from the solar photovoltaic project.

Highland Data:			
Energy supplier		Direct Energy with ComEd transmission	
Contract duration		7/7/17-6/30/2022*	*We have confirmed that the size of power generation we are looking into will not impact the Direct Energy contract or rate. We are told there may be additional costs from ComEd related to relay protection and extra capacity charges.
Monthly usage (per kwh)		500,000	
Annual usage (per kwh)		6,000,000	
Monthly energy supply charges		$ 30,000	
Monthly delivery service charge		$ 15,000	
Average total cost per month		$ 44,500	
Average total cost per year		$ 534,000	
Rate per kilowatt hour for electricity		0.05927	Fixed per contract
Distribution charge		0.0253	Approx 22% of this will be eliminated with solar if 500kw field is installed.
Customer charge/meter charge/meter lease/facility charge		0.005	Fixed - will not change regardless of solar
Approximate total rate per kilowatt hour		0.09	

Summary of Economics	
Initial Capital Cost	(950,000)
Avoided Electricity Cost	1,718,899
State Incentives	-
IL SREC (Solar For All - Group B)	932,419
Operating Costs	(358,977)
Total Lifetime Benefit	**1,342,342**

Direct Ownership Cumulative Benefit
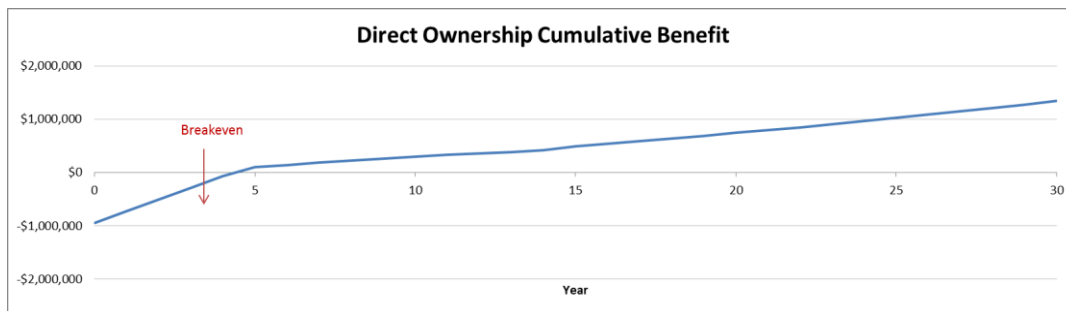
In evaluating vendor proposals, a scoring rubric was used. The rubric provided a method for systematically evaluating multiple proposals that included a breadth of information. A sample of the qualification factors contained within the rubric is included here:

SECTION 1 - TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION
SAMPLE PROJECT DOCUMENTATION
Quality of Experience - Based upon the sample project packet submitted by the Offeror, as required in A.1.1 of the RFP, the information provided by the Offeror sufficient information to inform your ability determine the quality of service that would be provided if the Offeror were to be selected to install the solar array solicited in the HCC RFP soliciation?
Completeness of Proposal - Based upon the sample project packet submitted by the Offeror, as required in A.1.1. of the RFP, the information provided by the Offer complete, including the project drawings, equipment specifications, site elevations, renderings, and drawings, component lists, project schedules, project management reports, and commissioning procedures.
Technical Qualifications - Based upon the sample project packet submitted by the Offeror, as required in A.1.1 of the RFP, the information provided sufficient level of detail to assess the technical qualificiations of the firm, its staff, and project partners?
Engineering Qualifications - Based upon the sample project packet submitted by the Offeror, as required in A.1.1. of the RFP, the information provided a sufficient level of detail to assess the engineering qualification of the firm, its staff, and the project partners?
SAMPLE PROJECT - SCORE SUB-TOTALS

The processes used to identify and recommend PHS projects directly link to the College's strategic plan. Moreover, the projects identified as a result of the FY2019 process also directly link to the College's budgetary planning. This process illustrates how the College is intentionally using data to review processes and, thus, improve the student experience. Additionally, it illustrates that the College is connecting its strategic planning and budgeting processes.

An additional example of data being utilized to impact change involves the Human Resources/Payroll department. Recognizing that effective hiring practices contribute to a positive student experience, Human Resources (HR) in conjunction with the Equal Employment/Affirmative Action (EE/AA) Committee, developed a survey for search committee members' completion to help identify areas for improvement regarding the search process. The results help HR determine additional training needs, discover search issues, develop additional tools or resources for the committees, and allow for some deeper discussions related to process and possible changes. At the close of each search, a survey is sent to the chair of the search committee, one is sent to the EE/AA representative assigned to the search committee, and another is sent to all other search committee members. In FY2018, as a result of the findings, the EE/AA Committee has developed or is in the process of developing the following:

- Search committee checklist
- Interview selection form
- Top/final candidate selection form
- Added topics for the committee chair meetings with the Associate Vice President of Human Resources
- Updated the invitation to employees to sit on a search committee by including a search timeline and a summary of search committee responsibilities
- Ground Rules for search committees
- List of inappropriate questions, if a question can be asked legally, and, if so, how it should be asked
- Probing questions training tool
- Online training for search committee members

Continuing the survey process will allow HR and the EE/AA Committee to determine the impact of their efforts.

The College also enhanced the connections between the budget-building process and the strategic planning process for fiscal year 2019. As part of the budget-building process, faculty, staff and administrators were expected to submit the strategic planning objective connected to any request for increased allocations. These requests were considered in the rationale for budget decisions as well as documented in a *Crosswalk between Highland Community College Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022 Goals and Objectives and FY19 Budget.* An example of the crosswalk is shown below in Figure 19 and the full document is available in Appendix JJ.

Figure 19.

Goal 1. Strengthen and expand high quality educational pathways for diverse student populations	FY19 Budget
Objectives that will help us reach goal 1:	*Budget center(s) and short description:*
1a. Develop matriculation pathways between high school and college level courses that align with secondary education and college readiness benchmarks.	1123 Integrated Read/Write ALP. Transitional Education (mathematics courses and reading courses) faculty salary and benefits, training, supplies, equipment.
1b. Enhance dual credit and distance education offerings through online and video streaming formats.	Various. Travel and training for dual credit observation and evaluation.

As the College nears the mid-point in the strategic planning cycle, a mid-point review process has already begun. This process will help the College identify the remaining projects that should be initiated in the next two and one-half years in order to meet the goals of the strategic plan. Some current projects may be postponed or retired in order to allocate resources efficiently. Any new projects developed as part of the mid-point review will take into account the College's retention, persistence, completion, and recruitment targets and other planning processes in order to coordinate efforts and assess progress across the institution. It is expected that any new initiatives connected to the strategic plan and requiring budget allocations will also be included in the project management database. The review will also help the College assess the planning process and make modifications to the 2022 – 2026 cycle, which is shown below.

Strategic Planning Cycle

Process	Timeline	Output
Mid-point Review	Beginning January 2019 – June 2019 (include new projects in FY'20 budget processes)	Report on mid-point progress, updated strategic plan, new projects in database, communication with faculty/staff and board
Process Review and Planning for 2022 Planning Cycle	August 2020 – October 2020	Decisions on process for planning cycle, new chairs and council members selected, invitations delivered, faculty/staff and board communications
Planning Cycle	October 2020 – April 2021	Actively engage communities and key constituent groups, Identified strategic goals for the College
Writing and Review	April 2021 – July 2021	Key constituent groups engaged in review process, budget information leveraged for FY22 budget process
Published Plan	July 2021	Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2026 published, communication to all constituent groups, budget and staffing processes for FY22 informed by plan

Evidence of the institution utilizing the project charter database and progress reports to connect the strategic planning and budgetary processes, track progress, and project completion is included in Appendix KK. (KK. Sample of Completed Project in the Project Management Database).

The College also utilizes large-scale survey data and other measures for monitoring progress against goals and outcomes at the institutional and programmatic level. While many of these data collection efforts had been on a regular cycle of implementation, the College was faced with postponing some of them during the Illinois budget impasse, which caused internal budget constraints. Within the past year, the College has made progress in these data collection efforts and strategically chose to administer the CCSSE/CCFSSE, SENSE (Survey of Entering Student Engagement), and the PACE. The College also continued to annually administer its Occupational Follow-up Survey and complete data required for participation in the National Community College Benchmarking project. Information on these surveys as well as the other data collection efforts that will be considered for budgeting in the next two fiscal years are provided in Appendix LL. (Institutional Survey & Measures Plan – FY2019 to FY2021). Factors that will help prioritize which ones to administer and at what pace will depend on the progress made in utilizing the data already collected for the administration of the surveys this past year,

the last time each data collection effort was made previously, and the most immediate needs. The goal for this planning is to restore the regularity of the survey implementation cycle.

The strategic planning process at Highland is a systematic and inclusive process that includes measurable initiatives that are directly tied to the budgeting process and designed to meet the College's broader strategic goals. Evidence of continuous improvement is apparent in the development of the project management database, commitment to utilizing the College's assessment, PACE, and CCSSE results for improvement of the student experience, and the efforts to directly connect and align the budgetary processes with strategic planning.

CONCLUSION

As detailed within, Highland Community College has been diligent and thorough in its efforts to address the concerns set forth in the HLC Action Letter. Beginning in 2016, the College purposefully and strategically provided professional development opportunities designed to increase understanding of accreditation expectations, assessment, target setting, and use of data to inform decision making which is documented in Appendix F (Professional Development Activities). Both financial and human resources have been committed to enhancing professional development, expanding the role of faculty and staff in this endeavor and embedding the practices within the culture of the institution. In so doing, there is a heightened awareness across the institution of the importance and value of these expectations.

At this time, all programs have completed curriculum maps and written outcomes to ensure the institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education. These outcomes have been posted on the HCC website, articulated in the 2019-2021 HCC Academic Catalog, and included in all syllabi. Furthermore, a systematic, annual assessment plan for assessing all outcomes within each program has been developed and implemented. By the time of the HLC Focused Visit, two years of data will have been collected, analyzed, and utilized to make program improvements. Additionally, the program assessment plans as well as the results and curriculum improvements will have been reviewed by the Assessment Mentors ensuring that the process is faculty-driven and that best practices can be documented and shared across the institution. Together, these actions taken by the College ensure that Core Component 3.A, "the institution's degree programs are appropriate to higher education" and Criterion 3, "the institution provides high quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered" is Met.

Highland has also created a systematic, comprehensive assessment cycle that now includes all five of the general education Institutional Outcomes. All five outcomes will have been assessed at least twice by the time the HLC Peer Review Team visits campus in April 2019. By expanding the process to include more faculty, providing updates at least twice a year at the fall and spring Opening Days In-services, and involving faculty in the development of strategies to improve areas of weakness, the general education assessment process is now fully developed and successfully implemented. It has taken into account all groups inclusive of the general education courses, including dual credit and programs in all degrees. In addition, Highland has developed and implemented a systematic, annual assessment process which assesses all

outcomes within each of its programs. As mentioned above, two years of data will have been collected, analyzed, and utilized to make program improvements by the time of the HLC Focused Visit. Furthermore, a plan has been established for regular and systematic assessment of student services and co-curricular activities. These efforts exhibit that Core Component 4.B, "the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning," is Met.

Moreover, Highland has demonstrated its adherence to Core Component 4.C, "the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational improvement through ongoing attention to retention, persistence, and completion rates in its degree and certificate programs." Highland has created clear and defined targets for retention, graduation, persistence, and recruitment that are challenging, yet feasible and in line with the mission of the institution. In so doing, both faculty and staff have been included in the target setting and in the creation of strategies to meet the targets. Faculty and staff involvement in the implementation of the strategies will be critical to their success. Processes are in place to regularly review progress toward these targets. As such, Highland believes that Criterion 4, "the institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning," is also Met.

Furthermore, linking the College's strategic plan, budgetary process, and the HLC Criterion has better aligned these key components. The development of the project management database to track progress on the strategic plan has provided a consistent and systematic mechanism for documenting and evaluating the use of data for the improvement of the student experience. This database is already expanding beyond the strategic plan objectives to include the SEM objectives so that documentation and evaluation of performance can be captured and monitored across the institution. This addresses the concern that the strategic planning process be better aligned with steps taken to improve operations and budgetary planning which was brought forth regarding Core Component 5.D, "the institution works systematically to improve its performance." Additional examples were provided to attest to the fact that Highland's "resources, structure, and processes are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities. The institution plans for the future." Thus, Highland trusts it has demonstrated that Criterion 5 is Met.

The assessment of student learning at the course, program, and institutional level for academics, student services, and co-curricular activities, the setting of targets for retention, graduation, persistence, and recruitment, and the utilization of data to inform improvements all speak to Highland's commitment to provide, re-evaluate, and improve the student experience. There is no question that HCC's efforts in all these areas had been developing more slowly than desired. Considering its prior pace, there is also no question that the pace and advancement over the last 18 months has been remarkable. The College has demonstrated a strong commitment and true team effort to make such significant progress within a relatively short period of time. This broader and deeper understanding of the value of assessment and systematic processes to utilize data to inform improvements demonstrates that these elements are now embedded within the culture of the institution. As such, these systems and processes will continue to guide decision making to ensure that Highland Community College continues to offer and promote a quality, cost effective, and dynamic student experience.

References

Heilman, S. & Kennedy-Phillips, L. (2011). Making Assessment Easier With the Organizational Effectiveness Model. *About Campus*, American College Personnel Association and Wiley Periodicals, Inc., doi: 10.1002/abc.20046

Russell, T., Simmons, S., & Howden, T. (2017, March – April). Making meaningful contributions to student learning outcomes in student affairs. In B. Gellman-Danley (President), Navigating the future.   Presentation at the 2017 annual conference of the Higher Learning Commission, Chicago, IL.