RIVERLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

In demonstration of its commitment to improvement of student learning, Riverland Community College embarked upon a multi-phase project in January 2008 as part of an Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) in the category "Helping Students Learn." The Higher Learning Commission established six AQIP categories to "provide a framework that institutions can use to examine their key processes and allow institutions to analyze, understand, and explore opportunities for improvement."[1] While Riverland Community College had an active focus on student learning outcomes assessment prior to 2008, the development of the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project (SLOAP) resulted in a comprehensive, robust plan for assessing and documenting student learning outcomes and using those results to improve teaching and learning.

This document includes the original AQIP Action Plan (Phases I through III) as well as updates and enhancements that have been made as SLOAP has grown and matured past the first three phases of the project.

AQIP Action Project Details: 'SLOAP'

This Action Project will result in the development and documentation of examples of student learning outcome assessment strategies for the Riverland Disciplines, Riverland Core Themes, and program degree outcomes. Phases II and III will answer the question: What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes? The student learning outcomes assessment plans and responses, results, and improvement strategies will be documented on a website structured for that purpose and available to the public.

Riverland Community College is committed to a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment effort that is focused on assessment that, in the spirit of the Higher Learning Commission's call to improving student learning through assessment, is more than 'a response to demands for accountability, more than a means of curricular improvement, but is fundamentally 'best understood as a strategy for understanding, confirming, and improving student learning'. This is also consistent with HLC's call to institutions to develop a Student Learning Outcomes Assessment effort that is 'meaningful, useful, and workable' for our institution.
The Higher Learning Commission has designed six Fundamental Questions for Conversations on Student Learning. This Action Project and Riverland's Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project addresses and answers these questions in the context of the Action Project Plan. These questions are:

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[1] "AQIP Categories." *Higher Learning Commission.* www.hlcommission.org/Accreditation/aqip-categories.html . Accessed 14 April, 2018.

1. How are your stated student learning outcomes appropriate to your mission, programs, degrees, and students?
2. What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?
3. In what ways do you analyze and use evidence of student learning?
4. How do you ensure shared responsibility for assessment of student learning?
5. How do you evaluate and improve the effectiveness of your efforts to assess and improve student learning?
6. In what ways do you inform the public and other stakeholders about what and how well your students are learning?

Riverland Community College has been engaged in a long-term effort to improve student learning that began in 2008 with a college-wide revision of all Master Course Outlines (Phase I). Phase II began in Fall, 2011 with an emphasis on degree outcomes for the Associate of Arts degrees and the career and technical degrees, diplomas, and certificates. Prior to 2008, Minnesota Transfer Curriculum Student Competencies were adopted as Riverland Discipline Student Competencies (Communications, Natural Sciences, Mathematical and Logical Reasoning, the Humanities and Fine Arts, and History, Behavioral, and Social Sciences) and Riverland Core Theme Student Competencies (Critical Thinking, Human Diversity, Global Perspectives, Ethical and Civic Responsibility, and People and the Environment) and these serve as a framework for the student learning outcomes in the Master Course Outlines. This action project is set within a larger framework of the Riverland Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment Plan. Phases II through V of this assessment project have resulted in documenting assessment strategies for degree outcomes for the degrees and diplomas offered by Riverland. Additionally, this assessment data has become a valuable tool for the improvement of teaching and learning.

Riverland's Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project 'SLOAP'

I. **Phase I: The Master Course Outline Revision Project –January 2008 – May 2011** initiated a college-wide revision of all Master Course Outlines in order to establish the relationship between the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum Student Competencies and all Riverland courses, as well as to establish measurable student learning outcomes for each course. Phase I was largely completed by the end of Spring Semester, 2011. Each year of this phase, each faculty member also completed a Student Learning Improvement Intentions (Plan and Response) Form and documented some type of learning outcome improvement in a course. In this phase, we developed our plan and answered Question 1 (see Project Detail, above).

II. **Phase II: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project– Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and Degree Outcomes Focus (2011- 2012)**
    A. Liberal Arts and Sciences (Discipline) Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for ONE outcome for EACH Minnesota Transfer Curriculum/Riverland Discipline Student Competency in EACH department.

B. Career and Technical Program Area Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for ONE outcome for EACH Minnesota Transfer Curriculum/ Riverland Core Theme Student Competency in their program.

III. **Phase III: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project - Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and Degree Outcomes Focus (2012- 2015)**

A. Liberal Arts and Sciences (Discipline) Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for ONE outcome for EACH Minnesota Transfer Curriculum/Riverland Core Theme Student Competency in their department's Master Course Outlines.

B. Program Area Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for ONE outcome for EACH degree outcome in their program.

IV. **Phase IV: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project – Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and Degree Outcomes Longitudinal Focus and Curriculum Review (2016 - 2019)**

A. Liberal Arts and Sciences Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for at least ONE outcome for a Minnesota Transfer Curriculum/Riverland Core Theme Student Competency and at least ONE Course-Specific Outcome in their department's Master Course Outlines. The selected outcome assessments will be repeated over a three-year cycle.

B. Program Area Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for at least ONE outcome for Core Theme Student Competency and at least ONE Course-Specific outcome in their program. The selected outcome assessments will be repeated over a three-year cycle.

C. This phase will also include development of a public website containing resources, information on the college's student outcomes assessment plan, and sample data gathered from actual assessments.

D. All programs and departments will undertake a review of their Master Course Outlines and all academic offerings on the Riverland website including awards, course list, course sequence, graduate outcomes, program fees, and faculty and advising information.

E. Program Area Faculty will trace Program Graduate Outcomes to identify specific courses in which these outcomes are introduced, reinforced, or met.

V. **Phase V: Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project – Minnesota Transfer Curriculum and Degree Outcomes Continued Longitudinal Focus (2019 -   )**

A. Liberal Arts and Sciences (Discipline) Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for ONE outcome for EACH Minnesota Transfer Curriculum/Riverland Discipline Student Competency and ONE outcome for EACH Minnesota Transfer Curriculum/Riverland Core Theme in EACH department. Specific outcomes will be selected in an effort to document assessment strategies for each outcome in the ten Minnesota Transfer Curriculum (MnTC) goal areas, 47 in total. The selected outcome assessments will be repeated over a three-year cycle. After the 3-year cycle is complete, faculty will implement and report on two new assessment strategies for the next 3-year cycle.

B. Program Area Faculty will work as departments to select, develop, and document an assessment strategy for at least ONE outcome for Core Theme Student Competency and at least ONE Course-Specific outcome in their program. Outcomes will be selected in an effort to cover a wide breadth of the Riverland Core Theme outcomes. The selected outcome assessments will be repeated over a three-year cycle. After the 3-year cycle is complete, faculty will implement and report on two new assessment strategies for the next 3-year cycle.

C. **Improvement Updates for Assessment Cycle 2 (2021-2024) of SLOAP Phase V**
   1) Institutional Learning Outcomes
      - Since the inception of the SLOAP project, the college had identified and has been measuring five outcomes found throughout the entire college curriculum. However, until 2020, Riverland had not articulated Institutional Learning Outcomes. By the end of 2020, four Institutional Learning Outcomes were developed by the Assessment Committee with assistance and feedback from multiple areas of the institution, including Student Activities, Academic Affairs, faculty, Riverland Cabinet, and the Academic Affairs and Standards Committee.
      - Assessment of student learning regarding these Institutional Learning Outcomes will be included in Riverland's SLOAP project beginning in the Fall 2021 semester. Both Liberal Arts and Program Area Faculty will demonstrate measurement of Institutional Learning Outcomes through classroom-level assessments.
      - In addition to these direct measures, indirect measures of demonstration of learning will be developed and implemented. These include a student activity engagement survey as well as a course survey tool, with both being piloted in the Spring 2021 semester. Both instruments will allow students to self-report on levels of achievement regarding the Institutional Learning Outcomes.
   2) Increased Faculty Participation Requirements
      i) In an effort to improve teaching and the assessment of student learning at Riverland Community College, beginning with Phase V Assessment Cycle 2 (2021-2024), all faculty teaching 6 credits of more per semester will be required to participate in the SLOAP project. Previously, only Temporary Full-Time and Unlimited Full-Time faculty had been expected to create and report SLOAP assessments. The Riverland Assessment Committee and Academic Affairs leadership hope to achieve the following goals by taking this action:
         - improve SLOAP data collection
         - improve the accuracy of student learning data reporting
         - emphasize the importance of student learning assessment at Riverland Community College
         - increase faculty involvement and accountability in SLOAP

- demonstrate increased self-reflection and department-level reflection among faculty regarding instructional strategies and assessment methodology and tools
3) Improvement of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) practices
    i) Implement and communicate revised, revitalized Credit for Prior Learning policy and procedures
    ii) The Assessment Committee, in conjunction with other key players such as the Faculty Mentors, Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and the Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator will develop and/or present trainings for faculty on developing reliable and valid Prior Learning Assessments.
    iii) The Assessment Committee and SLOAP Coordinator will provide assessment-related resources and assistance to faculty assessors, Faculty Mentors, and the Credit for Prior Learning Coordinator.

Administration and Oversight of the Project

This project is overseen by the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs and is managed through the Academic Affairs division of the College but is guided by the SLOAP Coordinator and the College's Assessment Committee. The primary impact of this project is on the teaching and learning areas of the College, the faculty and students. All faculty have been repeatedly invited to participate in this project, and the College is investing time and committing financially to faculty development for student learning outcomes assessment. Professional faculty development time is offered to departments and programs for meeting for the purposes of planning, completing, and documenting assessment strategies.

The Assessment Committee is led by the faculty SLOAP Coordinator and meets monthly to plan, strategize, and assess aspects of SLOAP as well as other projects and areas relating to the assessment of student learning. The committee members represent the following Discipline and Program Area faculty clusters (in turn representing all academic coursework in the college):

Discipline Areas:
MnTC Goal Area (1): Communications: English, English as a Second Language, French, Humanities (HUMA Courses) Spanish, and Speech
MnTC Goal Area (3): Natural Sciences: Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Health, Physical Education, Physics
MnTC Goal Area (4): Mathematics and Logical Reasoning: Mathematics, Philosophy (Logic Course)
MnTC Goal Area (5): History and Social and Behavioral Sciences: Anthropology, Economics, Geography, Global Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology, and Statistics
MnTC Goal Area (6): Humanities and Fine Arts: Arts, Digital Media, Music, and Theatre

Program Areas:
Agriculture and Food Science: AGBS, AGSC, FBMT, FSCI
Allied Health: RADT, NURS (all levels –RN, LPN, CNA, etc., including NURS, HCHH, HCNA, PTCA)

Business: CPRO, BUSA, BUSO, ACCT, SMGT
Trade and Industry: AUTO, CARP, CMAE, CRTS, DESL, ELEC, MFGT, IMMR, SOLAR, TRDR, WELD, WIND
Service, Safety & Wellness: LAWE, COSM, CRJU, EMER, FIRE, GEN STUDIES, HSER, MASS

The broad scope of this project, which will be providing documentation of assessment for all key Minnesota Transfer Curriculum/Riverland Discipline and Core Theme Student Learning Outcomes and program degree outcomes, necessitates a multi-year timeframe. The College has committed to providing time for faculty to collaborate on these efforts during the College Conference Days and has even designated entire dedicated days for it in the academic calendar. Additionally, the faculty-led Assessment Committee has regularly offered assessment-related trainings and professional development opportunities to Riverland faculty since 2015. Topics have included best practices in writing learning objectives and outcomes, types and creation of rubrics, SLOAP 101 sessions, curricular mapping, Prior Learning Assessment, and similar trainings.

Faculty will be encouraged to engage in a review of their SLOAP work with a member or members of the Assessment Committee. Individual faculty or departments can request a review of their current or prior SLOAP plans and responses, with the intention of receiving feedback from the Assessment Committee regarding ways the planning, collection, and/or use of assessment data might be enhanced or improved.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Reporting
The Assessment Committee has worked closely with the Web Developer (Communications Department) and the Institutional Researcher in designing and building a SharePoint-based website to enter, store, and gather outcomes assessment data. The 'SLOAP site' went live in 2016 and this project was selected by the Higher Learning Commission as the subject for a presentation on innovation at their 2018 Annual Conference. Updates and enhancements to this site are planned for early to mid-2021 in order to improve ease of use, to incorporate Institutional Learning Outcomes assessment, and to allow for better and more efficient collection and reporting of numerical data.

Each program area and/or department has submitted Student Learning Improvement Plans and Responses for 2011-2012, 2012 – 2013, and 2013-2014, and 2014-2015 (the target of those are as explained in the Project Detail section). These have been placed on a learning management site created for this purpose and are accessible by all faculty. The dissemination of this information will answer Question 6 (see Project Detail, above). The success of this project will be measured by the quality and results of the responses and the evidence of student learning improvement provided in the responses. The collaborative work of the faculty in this project provides a positive answer to Question 4 (see Project Detail, above).

Since 2015, the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Project faculty leadership and Academic Affairs administrators have evaluated how and where Riverland's degree outcomes (institution and academic unit student learning goals and competencies) are identified,

measured, achieved, and improved, utilizing information submitted by the faculty each year of the project. The Assessment Committee continues to work to answer the following questions:

1. Where in the curriculum do students demonstrate core theme and core discipline goal competency?
2. How do we measure competency?
3. Where are students demonstrating knowledge and understanding expectations?
4. What will we improve to enhance demonstrated competence among student graduates?
5. How will we know that student learning has improved?

By the end of this Action Project, it is our goal that the Student Learning Outcomes Assessment team will have completed the following, and in this process, answers Questions 3 and 5 (see Project Detail, above):

6. Identify the penetration of institution-level **core theme goals and student competencies** at course and discipline/program goals and student competencies for their discipline/program area.
7. Identify where students demonstrate (preferably capstone) competency.
8. Identify the variety of measures used to assess student demonstrations of competency.
9. Target improvement (through plan/response forms, strategic plans and/or planning and budgeting initiatives) to enhance one through three above.
10. Report on improvement strategies.