Assessment for Student Learning: Course and Program Assessment

BACKGROUND

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Rock Valley College (RVC) has identified KPI to inform the college community about institutional health and development. The College KPI are presented in five categories aligned to Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Public Agenda Goals, including *Educational Attainment, Access, and Success*; *Affordability*; *Educational Quality*; *Accountability*; and *Addressing Regional Economic Needs*.

Assessment for student learning is a KPI aligned to the College category of *Educational Quality*. As a measure of *Educational Quality*, this category is aligned to the IBHE Public Agenda Goal to raise the number of people with quality postsecondary credentials and to improve transitions along the educational pipeline.

Assessment for Student Learning

Assessment is a continuous and dynamic process of collecting, synthesizing, and interpreting information to aid in continuous improvement efforts and decision making. Assessment for student learning is conducted at the institutional, program or discipline, and course level. Because of the scope and magnitude of the levels of assessment, this KPI Summary Report will focus on the efforts and impact of course and program assessment.

> 🔗 Details about the assessment process at RVC can be found on the College website through the featured link, *Assessment for Student Learning.*

Course Assessment

Course assessment is designed to measure success across all sections of a particular course (e.g., ENG 101, MTH 099, or SOC 190) and includes all course delivery modalities (e.g., face-to-face, internet, hybrid). As such, course assessment provides for a consistent level of academic rigor and provides faculty with assurances that students can progress to the next level within a specific curriculum or program. Also, since the majority of our students transfer individual courses, if not degrees, course assessment data affirms for students and transfer institutions that our students' coursework adequately prepares them for further higher education.

Program/Discipline Assessment

Program/discipline assessment measures student success across a collection of courses that may or may not lead to a credential. A program is a group of courses that culminates in a degree or certificate (e.g., Associate of Applied Science in Automotive Service Technology or Automotive Engine Performance Certificate). A discipline is a collection of courses within an academic department that does not offer a degree or certificate (e.g., Composition and Literature or Mathematics).

RESULTS

Key components of the assessment cycle are presented in Figure 1. These components include review and update of the Master Course Syllabus (MCS) to keep learning outcomes and course content current, creation and implementation of an assessment plan, analysis and documentation of assessment findings, and identification of next steps for continuous improvement.

Figure 1: Course Assessment Cycle

Figure 2 displays the status of academic year (AY) 2017-2018 course assessment for the first three stages of the assessment cycle. Values represent the percentage of courses scheduled for assessment that had something documented in Taskstream. Courses are expected to be assessed at least once every five years.

Figure 2: Percentage of Courses with Progress Documented in Taskstream (AY 2017-2018)
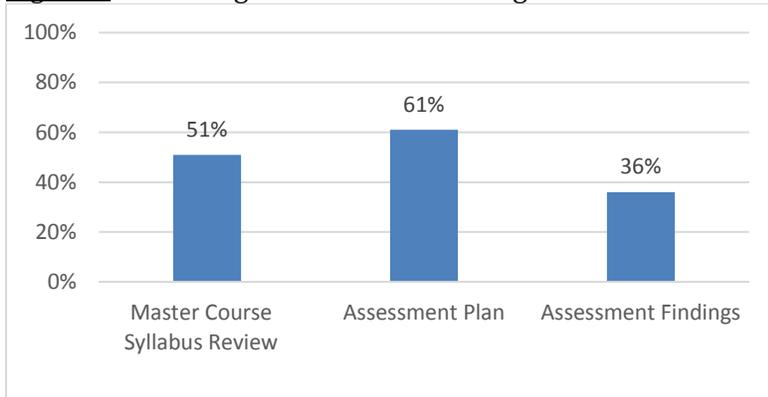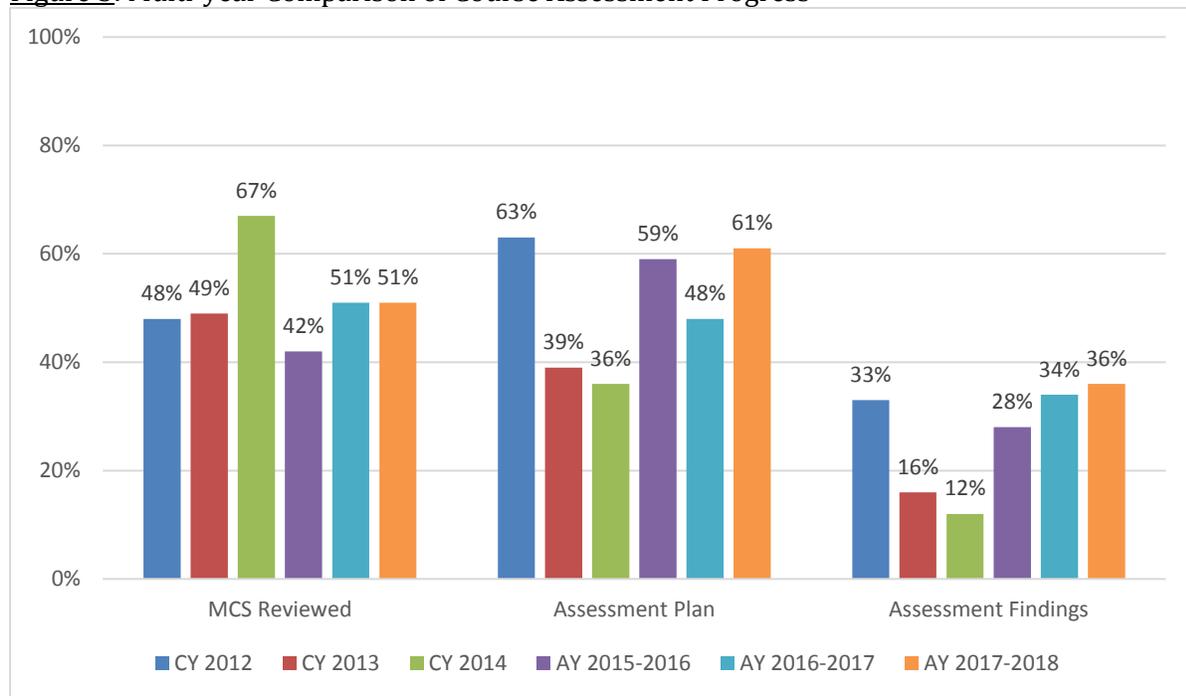

Data in Figure 2 indicate:
- MCS were reviewed for just over half of the courses scheduled for assessment.
- While most courses scheduled for assessment (61%) have documented assessment plans, only 36% have documented assessment findings.

Figure 3 compares course assessment progress for calendar years 2012 through 2014 and academic years 2015/16, 2016/17, and 2017/18. Percentages represent courses for which a step in the assessment cycle was completed or in progress.

Figure 3: Multi-year Comparison of Course Assessment Progress

Data in Figure 3 indicate:

- The number of assessment plans filed increased by 13% in AY 2017-218 from AY 2016-2017
- The number of assessment findings increased by 2% in AY 2017-218 from AY 2016-2017
- The number of MCS reviewed remained flat in AY 2017-218 from AY 2016-2017

These data suggest that course assessment progress is consistent with the focus of faculty development day activities related to assessment. For example, in an attempt to increase documentation for 2017/18, time was devoted during the January 2018 Faculty Development Day to documenting 2017 plans and findings. This is most likely the reason for the greater percentage of plans and findings documented in 2017/18 as compared to recent years.

After a dip in AY 2016/17, documentation of assessment plans and findings increased for academic year 2017/18. This may be a result of more Academic Chairs gaining familiarity with the Taskstream assessment platform. Many faculty have commented that Taskstream is more user-friendly than the previous assessment management system. Such ease of use has most likely contributed to the increase in documentation.

Data provided within this section suggest that, in general, faculty are more likely to make progress on course assessment if provided designated time to work with their colleagues and given access to user-friendly tools. As process improvements increase the level of participation in assessment activities, the College can shift from a focus on compliance to a focus on closing the assessment loop (i.e., using assessment findings to improve student learning). College-wide gains in assessment

documentation and use of assessment findings may be further achieved through additional assessment efficiencies. The next section provides exemplars of programs/disciplines that have made progress on assessment by creating efficient processes.