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January 3, 2024

Dr. David Sam  
President  
Elgin Community College  
1700 Spartan Dr.  
Elgin, IL 60123-7193

Dear President Sam:

Elgin Community College's interim report has been reviewed. The staff analysis of the report is attached.

On behalf of the Higher Learning Commission, staff received the report on Assessment. No further reports are required. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025-26.

For more information on the interim report process, contact HLC at [interimreports@hlcommission.org](mailto:interimreports@hlcommission.org).  
Your HLC staff liaison is Stephanie Brzuzy.

Thank you,  
Higher Learning Commission

cc: Philip Garber, Accreditation Liaison Officer  
Stephanie Brzuzy, HLC Staff Liaison

**STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT****DATE: December 22, 2023****STAFF LIAISON: Stephanie Brzuzy****REVIEWED BY: Jackie Freeze****INSTITUTION:** Elgin Community College, Elgin, IL**EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** David Sam, President**PREVIOUS HLC ACTION AND SOURCES:**

A report on assessment of student learning.

**REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY:**

Based upon the HLC Institutional Actions Council (IAC) approved requirement as a result of the Mid-Cycle review of 2020 for an Interim report on the assessment of student learning, Elgin Community College (ECC) submitted the report on the due date of Dec. 15, 2023. The Mid-Cycle review indicated a need to provide follow-up information as follows: “The purpose for the Interim Monitoring Report will be to monitor general education learning outcomes assessment progress over the next three years. The report will focus on this topic in two ways: demonstrated significant faculty involvement in the general education assessment process—real numbers and artifacts collected and clearly identified outcomes that have been incorporated to improve student learning as a result of the assessment process. The report should document both the process, the involvement, the outcomes, the dissemination of results, and the actions taken based on the results.” The IAC broadened the requirement to reflect a requirement to do overall review of the college’s assessment of student learning.

ECC provided a comprehensive report that begins by reframing the problem and challenge and covers elements of the college’s assessment of student learning in well-defined sections. Narrative is concise and descriptive and is supported by thirteen appendices that provide detailed information on policies and data on assessment activities.

**REPORT SUMMARY:**

Elgin Community College started the report by providing the statement of the Review Team’s recommendation regarding general education assessment. The report then moves into a discussion of the overall challenges facing assessment of student learning. This includes a need to strengthen course and co-curricular assessment and the need to redesign the assessment structure to address inconsistencies and maximum the ability to utilize data in decision-making to improve student learning. There was also a defined need to analyze assessment data for specific populations and ensure equity among student group achievements. The institution made a commitment to transition from an assessment effort based upon compliance to one based upon inquiry and improvement. The institution’s efforts included “creation of an assessment philosophy, generating significant faculty involvement in the general education assessment process, communication of assessment results, improved student learning as a result of the assessment process, and incorporation of co-curricular assessment into the general education assessment process.”

**Process Changes:**

ECC drafted a new assessment philosophy statement following listening sessions among faculty and other key stakeholders regarding strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement in the assessment of student learning. The new philosophy statement: “*Learning outcomes assessment at ECC is an ongoing, collective process of examining student learning for the purpose of improving learning for all student groups. Meaningful and effective outcomes assessment involves understanding the mental models through which we view student learning, nurturing curiosity, collaborating within and across departments to develop methods to measure student progress towards course, program, and general education learning outcomes, and engaging in productive dialogue with each other to identify impactful adjustments to instruction and curriculum.*” Appendix A details themes that were identified from the listening sessions. A new Assessment Strategy Team was created in March 2020 to help oversee the assessment effort.

The College submitted its quality improvement project to the HLC to continue the assessment and equity momentum. The project, Advancing Equity through the Assessment of Student Learning Quality Initiative, was approved by HLC on July 26, 2021. This initiative focuses on equity across the various student populations within the assessment effort. A key component of this initiative is professional development for faculty. The report lists the development programs that have occurred to date. Details were also provided in Appendix G.

1. PD1: Asset Thinking & Equity Gaps
2. PD2: Alignment and Assessment Planning
3. PD3: Honing Your Assessment Plan
4. PD4: Interpreting Data/Collective Meaning Making
5. PD5: Reviewing Your Data
6. PD6: Identifying Interventions
7. PD7: Conclusions and Next Steps

Additional professional development occurs for faculty and administrators through courses offered by the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE).

ECC has identified initial focus areas for co-curricular assessment. The first-round programs include: Honors, Study Abroad, Multicultural and Global Initiatives Committee (a committee that advocates the college’s EDI efforts), Athletics, and Transforming and Impacting Undergraduate Men Pursuing Higher Education (a mentoring program for young men of color). The report provided an example of the co-curricular assessment of the honor’s poster symposium. The institution utilized results to identify areas for improvement.

The report includes a timetable of assessment activities that spans from Spring 2020 to Fall 2023

### **Faculty Involvement**

ECC made enhancing faculty involvement in the assessment process a priority and included changes that made faculty the center of the assessment effort. Several initiatives helped to facilitate this change. Faculty assessment cohorts were developed to review data and make changes to assessment processes. Faculty apply to be in a cohort and serve for terms of four semesters. An equity gap report (Appendix D) was created and assigned to faculty cohorts for review and action. Between Fall 2021 and Spring 2023, 261 courses have been reviewed under the new assessment process, encompassing about 30% of the college’s transfer, CTE and adult basic education courses. In Fall 2023, the cohort lead role was expanded to include serving as an assessment liaison for those faculty not currently directly involved in the cohort process. Significant administrative support is also provided to support the efforts of the cohorts and the Assessment Strategy Team.

Alignment of the course level outcomes to the general education outcomes has been an important part of the changes to the assessment effort. As course analysis occurs, information is fed to the general education assessment via the Student Learning Assessment Advisory Committee (SLAAC). An example cited of this connection is the assessment of communication courses and their relationship to the general education category of communication and critical thinking.

### **Dissemination of Information**

In the summer of 2021, a new module within the college's learning management system (D2L) was made available to faculty to facilitate the collection of student learning assessment data linked to course and general education learning outcomes. The IR office assists with the extraction and analysis of data. Example dashboards were included in Appendix H. Disaggregated data can also be reviewed via visualization tools. Data is widely shared among faculty cohorts, course leads, and others, and periodic faculty meetings are used for discussion and feedback for change. A comprehensive assessment website has been created and serves as the central location for all assessment data and reports. Learning Improvement Reports are also generated and distributed and utilized to document analysis and progress in improving student learning.

An online Course Assessment Toolkit was also developed that details each of the elements of the student learning assessment process and is available as departments embark upon efforts to improve student learning for all subgroups.

### **Results**

ECC academic departments meet and discuss assessment results. In the report, the institution cited several examples of changes that occurred in courses as a result of the data. The Student Learning Assessment and Advisory Committee (SLAAC) synthesizes the disaggregated data from individual courses across the campus and identifies themes to address general education assessment. FY24 general education assessment focus areas are critical thinking and information literacy. SLAAC has determined through Critical Thinking data, that students are largely meeting or exceeding expectations in the outcome, with the weakest area under critical thinking being in problem solving.

Elgin Community College facilitated the commitment to shifting the institutional culture regarding assessment by reviewing and updating key documents to systematize the assessment process.

- Teaching and Learning Excellence is part of the Strategic Plan. Mastery of learning outcomes is key college goal.
- Job descriptions, collective bargaining agreements and employee handbooks were updated to reflect the commitment and processes related to assessment.
- Cohort leads took on the responsibility of assessment liaisons.
- Departments are beginning to develop supplemental departmental assessment plans to take institutional processes to the more granular level.

### **REPORT ANALYSIS:**

Elgin Community College took a systematic approach to revamping its assessment of student learning and to making a commitment to changes that would result in a culture of student learning inquiry and improvement. The college built an infrastructure including individual faculty involvement, committee participation, and administrative support to make the system inclusive and successful. The result is a fairly complex system of student learning assessment that involves the faculty at the course and general education assessment level. Investments were made in technology and staffing to support the effort. The report is well laid out and gives an excellent picture of the scope of the activities that have happened in the last three years. The institutional commitment is obvious, and the results are beginning to show.

The report provides an overview on how the changes occurred and the appendices include detail on the listening sessions, committee activities, and data results. One focus of the effort was to facilitate the ability to disaggregate data to determine equity among student populations. A sample result is shown below:

	All	White	Black	Latino	Asian
Average success rate	75.5%	79.0	62.1	72.4	78.0
CTE Courses (non-HP)	79.8%	82.3	63.8	79.2	80.8
Health Professions Courses	91.5%	92.8	82.0	90.6	93.2
Transfer Courses (college-level)	74.3%	77.7	61.8	70.7	76.6
Developmental ENG/RDG/LTC	64.7%	74.6	51.7	62.2	69.9
Developmental MTH	60.2%	64.5	48.5	58.3	64.0

Source: Interim Report ECC, Appendix D

This initial data demonstrated the general patterns of success as well as the variability seen in different parts of the curriculum. Each semester cohorts of review are identified and data similar to the table above and provided at the course level. The Appendices provide significant detail from the quality initiative project.

The Assessment Dashboards and the website provide data for assessment decision-making. A sample section of a dashboard:



Source: ECC Interim Report, Appendix H

ECC has addressed all of the expectations of the mid-cycle review and the overall HLC mandate regarding the assessment of student learning by reviewing and revamping of the assessment of student learning process. There has not been time to compile much trend data or to regularly review all of the infrastructure changes for sustainability. The institution should continue to build upon the system and document its analysis and changes. There will be an expectation during the 2025-26 comprehensive review that the institution has continued the momentum and can provide significant results data.

**ANALYSIS CONCLUDING STATEMENT:**

Elgin Community College has complied with the interim report requirements set forth in the March 2020 Mid-Cycle Review and the HLC Action Letter of May 5, 2020. The evidence indicates that the institution continues to make progress in addressing the assessment of student learning. Significant progress has been made since spring 2020 and the institution is utilizing data to inform decisions to improve student learning. The institution has built assessment into the institutional culture and created systems that appear to be sustainable. The college will have an opportunity to continue to highlight progress during the next comprehensive review in 2025-26.

Based upon the evidence provided in the report, the Higher Learning Commission acknowledges the institution’s efforts with respect to assessment of student learning and will not require additional reporting on this matter.

**STAFF FINDING:**

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s), or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 4B.

Statements of Analysis (check one below)

Evidence demonstrates adequate progress in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention is required in the area of focus.

Evidence demonstrates that further organizational attention and HLC follow-up are required.

Evidence is insufficient and a HLC focused visit is warranted.

**STAFF ACTION:** Receive the report on Assessment.

No further reports are required.

The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2025-26.