

# The Higher Learning Commission Action Project Directory

## Central Arizona College

Project Details		
<b>Title</b>	General Education Outcomes	<b>Status</b> COMPLETED
<b>Category</b>	1-Helping Students Learn	<b>Updated</b> 09-11-2009
<b>Timeline</b>		<b>Reviewed</b> 09-15-2009
<b>Planned Project Kickoff</b>	01-01-2008	<b>Created</b> 11-24-2009
<b>Actual Completion</b>	06-15-0010	<b>Version</b> 2 of 2

### 1: Project Goal

A: Review and revise the Central Arizona College (CAC) General Education Learning Outcomes.

### 2: Reasons For Project

A: CAC developed and adopted a college policy in 1997 stating college programs would revolve around a set of defined general education learning outcomes. In 1998, a set of General Education Learning Outcomes were developed. Given the changing needs of CAC students and the community it serves, the college believes it is time to review and appropriately revise the outcomes to meet needs of stakeholders today and in the future. In addition, CAC is participating in the HLC Assessment Academy. A primary project for this is assessment of general education outcomes. The college believes the outcomes should be updated prior to taking on a comprehensive assessment project.

### 3: Organizational Areas Affected

A: Faculty Curriculum Office Assessment Office Institutional Planning and Research

### 4: Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Curriculum Process. The CAC curriculum process includes a mandatory three-year review for all courses in the course bank. Once the CAC general education outcomes are revised, this process will require appropriate course level outcomes to be aligned to the general education outcomes. Program Review Process. The Program Review process will require review of alignment of program outcomes to the general education outcomes. General Education Outcomes Assessment (new). Once revised, the college will begin another action project focused on assessment of general education outcomes.

### 5: Project Time Frame Rationale

A: The timeframe is appropriate to involve faculty and other instructional staff in the review and revision process.

### 6: Project Success Monitoring

A: Progress will be monitored in the following manner: Bi-weekly meetings of Action Project Team. Monthly meeting with College President to report and discuss progress. Regular reports to institution on progress

### 7: Project Outcome Measures

A: Revised set of general education learning outcomes exist. Faculty demonstrate awareness and use of general education outcomes. Gaps in curriculum and programs identified and used to improve on deficiencies. Course and program offerings support student achievement of general education outcomes.

## 8: Other Information

A: None

## Project Update

### 1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: As of fall 2009, Central Arizona College (CAC) continues active status as a Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Assessment Academy participant. In support of this Action Project, CAC restructured several standing committees resulting in the absorption of the Learning Outcomes Review Committee into the Curriculum Committee, and the Academic Review Committee was disbanded due to redundancy of charges. The Academic Program Review Committee adapted new user-friendly, correctly rubric-aligned forms, and the Assessment Academy Team reformulated membership due to attrition becoming a subcommittee of the new formed Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) Committee. This committee primary focus was updating and revising of CAC's General Education Outcomes (GEOs). Using faculty feedback from spring 2008, the SLOA Committee further revised and developed a second draft of GEOs. Faculty were provided a second draft via their division, and asked to review and provide feedback, during the fall 2008 Faculty Development Day. During the fall 2008 semester, the SLOA Committee reviewed faculty's comments, researched outcomes from peer institutions, members who attended prior HLC/Assessment Academy workshops and conferences shared best practices, and used the findings from Arizona's Articulation Task Force on General Education Outcomes to further develop a third draft. At the spring 2009 CAC all district in-service, the third draft of GEOs was shared and feedback requested. Comments and suggestions were forwarded to the SLOA Committee and GEOs were revised again. In February 2009, an additional group of CAC representatives attended the HLC's Workshop "Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy." This workshop was instrumental in directing CAC's efforts for further refining the GEOs and their standards. The refined, final draft and the project's progress were presented at CAC's spring 2009 Faculty Development Day and at both the Managerial/Technical and Support Staff Professional Development Days, as well as at meetings with each dean and division head. Also during spring 2009, subcommittees formed in preparation of assessing the updated GEOs. Final drafts and revisions of CAC's Policy 402 and 403 were approved by the SLOA Committee and the Vice President of Academic of Programs and Services, CAC's Chief Academic Officer. The Director of Curriculum and Student Learning Assessment, who was served as the SLOA Committee chair, met with the Policy and Procedure Committee chair to determine a time frame for the approval process. The final drafts were forwarded to the President's Office for review by Executive Council, consisting of the CAC President and Vice Presidents. The Executive Council had no further revisions and the final draft has been placed on the Policy and Procedure Committee's agenda with anticipated Governing Board approval expected no later than January 2010.

### 2: Institution Involvement

A: SLOA Committee members and the Assessment Academy Team, an SLOA subcommittee, has systematically consulted with faculty, staff, and students to achieve Action Project progress (see details above). The SLOA Committee consisting of district-wide members includes representatives from each constituency groups. In addition, the Committee chair sought student volunteers to serve as representatives on the SLOA Committee for further input. Progress was reported and is readily available online via the district shared drive; documents shared with CAC included the committee meeting minutes, division reports, and PowerPoint presentations. Presentations to and discussion with each Dean's team, consisting of faculty chairs and divisions heads, begins September 8, 2009, to appraise them of the progress on this Action Project and plans for the 2009-2010 academic year.

### 3: Next Steps

A: The Executive Council is currently reviewing the final GEO draft and the GEO draft policies 402 and 403. Upon approval, the documents will be placed on the Policy and Procedure Committee's agenda with anticipated

Governing Board approval expected no later than January 2010. The approved revised policies 402 and 403 will be viewable from the college's shared drive. Once the updated GEOs are approved, they will be published in CAC's 2010-2011 college catalog, college website, included in each course syllabus, and any other related materials or documents. The updated GEOs will be communicated to the Faculty Senate and each constituency group, as well as at division, dean, and departmental meetings. The approved documents will also be accessible via the college's shared drive. Other next steps include establishing and maintaining a three-year continuous review cycle for the GEOs. CAC anticipates retiring this Action Project once the updated GEOs are approved and fully integrated into the college culture.

#### **4: Resulting Effective Practices**

**A:** 1. Identified and documented the process steps for updating and revising CAC's General Education Outcomes; 2. Outlined a manageable timeline for subsequent updates and revisions; 3. Communicated regularly at CAC events and to departments and divisions, thus supporting continuous improvement within CAC's culture; 4. An assessment team conducted a benchmark visit of a peer institution, San Juan College, to share best practices, processes, and strategies for avoiding pitfalls; and 5. Used multiple modes of communication to ensure all stakeholders received clear, consistent information regarding the Action Project's current status.

#### **5: Project Challenges**

**A:** CAC made strides in identifying and documenting assessment processes for reviewing and updating the General Education Outcomes. These processes will ease the transition of district restructuring, including future retirements of the Vice President of Academic Programs and Services and the Vice President of Institutional Effectiveness and Advancement. The AQIP Liaison continues her second year in this position, but has identified the need for mentoring others in this key role. Additional challenges are identifying process owners to coordinate and guide the process. These proactive measures will ensure the process is embedded and becomes part of the institution's system of processes.

#### **6: AQIP Involvement**

**A:** Expert advice and assistance is appreciated, especially related to developing and maintaining a culture of continuous improvement related to General Education.

---

## **Update Review**

---

#### **1: Project Accomplishments and Status**

**A:** The original Action Project declaration (1-01-08) targeted a completion date of eight months (8-30-08), a very aggressive timeframe. Organizational restructuring, as noted in the 2008 institutional response, affected momentum on this Action Project. It appears that Central Arizona College rededicated its efforts to achieve stated objectives during this past year and has progressed within the parameters of the new governance organization. Due to reorganization and revised decision-making structures, progress on this project appears to be slower than originally planned. The Action Project workgroup charged with this initiative should be commended for its persistence and focus on the ultimate goal of this project—updated general education outcomes. It appears that this goal has been achieved. Changes in Curriculum Committee responsibilities and disbanding of the Academic Review Committee within the reorganized paradigm can ultimately enhance efficiency and decision-making concerning general education outcomes and assessment. It may be beneficial to the institution to flowchart the new governance model, confirm workgroup/committee charters, and identify linkages between revised workgroups. This will enable the institution to better understand new roles and responsibilities as well as decision-making flow within the various groups and systems impacted. Continued and active involvement in the Higher Learning Commission's (HLC) Assessment Academy as stated by the College can provide an objective roadmap as CAC continues its efforts. Participation in the HLC's workshop "Making a Difference in Student Learning: Assessment as a Core Strategy" has provided resources and references as faculty and staff address general education outcomes and concomitant assessment of those outcomes. Expertise

and “lessons learned” can be shared with faculty and staff during CAC staff development activities. Such initiatives demonstrate that CAC continues its efforts to successfully complete this Project. This Action Project demonstrates several AQIP principles. These include: Leadership – Communication with and support from the President and administration has enabled the team charged with this Action Project to continue its efforts even as reorganization transpired. Involvement – Faculty had the opportunity to provide input to the first, second, and third drafts of the general education outcomes (GEO). This feedback is vital to institutional understanding of the scope and magnitude of teaching, learning and assessing GEO’s. Focus – The Action Project team continued its charge through several evolutions of the GEO draft and has maintained its vision for improved student learning and valid assessment of that learning. This vision was maintained in spite of the challenge of changing personnel as well as evolving institutional organizational structures. The finalized general education outcomes are scheduled for Governing Board approval by January 2010. This date will mark the end of one journey that framed student learning expectations, but begins a new venture for CAC as courses and programs begin aligning with the new GEO’s. The planned comprehensive assessment project has been framed by stakeholder approval of general education outcomes.

## **2: Institution Involvement**

**A:** The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment (SLOA) Committee (and respective subcommittee) is composed of members from each constituency group as well as student volunteers. Even though constituency groups are not identified, representation from all campuses, disciplines, and support services staff can ensure input from multiple voices and communication with diverse areas of the College. The SLOA Committee routinely reports progress using multiple mechanisms. Plans to conduct presentations and discussions with each Dean’s team during the academic year will enable stakeholders to stay abreast of issues and decisions. This also affords opportunities for faculty input. As this project evolves, key faculty members or departments might share “best practices” for successful learning and assessment strategies aligned with the new GEO’s. This approach highlights proactive faculty, models effective implementation of the new outcomes, and provides a resource for other instructors.

## **3: Next Steps**

**A:** CAC plans to move approval of the new GEO’s through the board governance process in order to adopt the general education outcome policies as part of its educational mission and vision. This step is integral to external stakeholder understanding and support. The College has also identified its systematic approach to communicating new GEO’s throughout the organization, in campus publications, and course documents. From the foundation of newly established outcomes, the planned three-year continuous review cycle for the GEO’s demonstrates a feedback loop inherent in continuous improvement. Since the revised GEO’s are planned for implementation during the 2010-2011 academic year, the institution may initiate dialogue on appropriate, multiple assessments, develop an assessment timeline, and discuss possible pilot projects during the spring 2010 term. This will continue the momentum generated by this Action Project and help address the stated challenge of integration into its institutional culture.

## **4: Resulting Effective Practices**

**A:** CAC notes five “effective practices” gained from this Action Project. Each demonstrates an application of a quality improvement strategy or principle. The development of process mapping for GEO’s and the creation of a timeline may also apply to updating outcomes of other educational programs. Sharing such practices with peers at workshops and conferences can provide valuable insight to others. The tools and techniques used by CAC to present and discuss issues, share progress, and solicit feedback reflect inclusive communication and support AQIP Category Five, Leading and Communicating. Lessons learned from this Action Project should facilitate how CAC addresses future Action Projects.

## **5: Project Challenges**

**A:** The institution acknowledges its challenge in identifying key leaders and process owners to coordinate and continue GEO assessment efforts. This will be vital to insure that newly approved GEO policies are fully

integrated into all programs of study. The efforts of this Action Project will also assist current and future leadership within the revised governance structure. Regardless of an organization's decision-making hierarchy, an institution needs to retain its focus on Helping Students Learn. CAC recognizes that the revised general education outcomes aligned with the College's mission and vision is the new framework for future students. Those "future" students will arrive in 2010. As administrators and faculty move in and out of the institution, the GEO foundation has been built. The Action Project team should be commended for its diligent efforts on this initiative.

## **6: AQIP Involvement**

**A:** CAC's request for input has been forwarded to the HLC.

---

## **Project Outcome**

---

### **1: Reason for completion**

**A:** Although the initially reported January 2010 target passed, further dialogue and refinement resulted in the Central Arizona College Governing Board successfully adopting revised general education outcomes at the June 2010 CAC Governing Board meeting.

### **2: Success Factors**

**A:** As stated in the 2009 Annual Update feedback, persistence and focus on the ultimate goal, while experiencing organizational restructuring is key factor of the project's success. In addition, emphasis was placed on engaging all staff in the process and continually communicating the project's progress. Additional plans include developing a graphic (such as a flow chart) of the alignment between this process and the revised committee structure.

### **3: Unsuccessful Factors**

**A:** Initially the targeted completion date was eight months, and in actuality, this Action Project took almost 30 months to complete. Future plans include reviewing this process' "steps" in hopes of streamlining and having a plan in place, in the event of further reorganization or leadership transitions. In addition, refining this process will result in better preparation for the next cycle of future General Education Outcomes revisions.