



# HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

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May 11, 2020

President Stacy Young  
Montcalm Community College  
2800 College Drive  
Sidney, MI 48885-9723

Dear President Young:

The interim report you submitted to our office has now 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 Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2022. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2027– 2028.

Please note: Revisions to HLC's Criteria for Accreditation will go into effect on September 1, 2020. Institutions will be evaluated against the revised Criteria for all reviews conducted after that date, including reviews related to previously assigned monitoring. Institutional reports submitted after September 1, 2020, that reference the Criteria should be written to the revised version. More information about the revised Criteria, including a crosswalk between the current and revised versions, is available on HLC's website at <https://www.hlcommission.org/criteria>.

For more information on the interim report process contact Lil Nakutis, Accreditation Processes Manager, at [lnakutis@hlcommission.org](mailto:lnakutis@hlcommission.org). Your HLC staff liaison is Tom Bordenkircher ([tbordenkircher@hlcommission.org](mailto:tbordenkircher@hlcommission.org)); (800) 621-7440 x 122.

Thank you.

HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION



## STAFF ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL REPORT

DATE: May 11, 2020

STAFF LIAISON: Tom Bordenkircher

REVIEWED BY: Steven Kapelke

**INSTITUTION:** Montcalm Community College, Sidney, MI

**EXECUTIVE OFFICER:** Dr. Stacy Young, President

**PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION AND SOURCES:** An interim report is required by 4/1/2020 on assessment – to gauge the College’s success in maturing programmatic assessment, and implementation of a successful general education assessment strategy.

This interim report derives from the Team Report of the institution’s 2017 Comprehensive Evaluation which includes the following:

Although the College has made some strides in the area of assessment of student learning at the programmatic level, assessment of the general education curriculum remains elusive. A monitoring report is recommended to ensure ongoing maturity in overall student learning assessment processes for the College. The report should include how the College:

- has gone from collecting data to interpretation and informing curricular changes on campus,
- integrated assessment activities into the general education curriculum, and
- matured overall assessment processes and instruments to better inform the faculty on the level of student learning in the programs and curriculum overall.

**REPORT PRESENTATION AND QUALITY:** The Montcalm Community College (MCC) interim report is presented in a clearly written narrative supported with a range of related materials contained in an extensive appendix. These supplementary documents include “General Education Goals and Rubrics,” “Course Mapping Rubrics,” a report from the institution’s assessment consultant, and the “GELO Course Alignment,” among other items. The evidence provided in the narrative and the appendices indicates that the report is thorough and candid.

**REPORT SUMMARY:** The Montcalm Community College interim report is organized in a series of topics related to the institution’s efforts at improving its system for assessing general education outcomes. Following a brief contextual section, the report begins by offering some historical background to general education assessment at the College (“Where We Were”), noting that the original general education learning outcomes (GELOs) were established in AY1996-1997 and reviewed formally again in 2007. Subsequent reviews and updates of GELOs took place in 2012 and again in 2015, using the Lumina Degree Profile Qualifications. The report lists the five GELOs as they stood then:

- *competence in written communications;*
- *competence in oral communications;*
- *knowledge of the natural world and application of scientific methods;*
- *competence in local, national and global citizenship;*
- *competence in basic computational methods, and mathematical concepts and applications.*

According to the report, interdisciplinary teams of faculty hold responsibility for overseeing the currency and assessment procedures for each GELO and for developing rubrics that are submitted to the Assessment Committee (AC) for approval. Every degree program has a general education advisory committee consisting of a wide range of internal and external constituent groups that review the outcomes for relevancy and currency. Similarly, occupational program advisory committees “*determine the Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs) students need fro each occupational program, including the GELO courses that meet each common outcome.*” The table below shows the GELO assessment timeline through Spring 2018.

General Education Assessment Plan Schedule				
Academic year	Semester	Prepare (Plan)	Asses (Do, Study)	Report (Further study, Act)
AY 2015	Fall 2014	Science Oral Communication	NA	NA
	Spring 2015	Math Written Communication	Science Oral Communication	NA
AY 2016	Fall 2015	Citizenship	Math Written Communication	Science Oral Communication
	Spring 2016	Science Oral Communication	Citizenship	Math Written Communication
AY 2017	Fall 2016	Math Written Communication	Science Oral Communication	Citizenship
	Spring 2017	Citizenship	Math Written Communication	Science Oral Communication
AY 2018	Fall 2017	Science Oral Communication	Citizenship	Math Written Communication
	Spring 2018	Math Written Communication	Science Oral Communication	Citizenship

Using “*in-house rubrics*,” the assessment teams assessed each GELO according to the schedule represented in the table above; assessment results were then submitted to the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and shared with the entire faculty during subsequent Faculty Professional Days.

The next section of the report, “Where We Are,” begins by describing the results of review by the Assessment Committee and subsequent actions undertaken by MCC based on the results of that review. The assessment teams created measurable learning objectives and revised the rubrics being employed to measure these. The institution also contracted with an individual experienced with assessment “*to work with the GELO teams to revise their goals.*” The revised and current GELOs are shown below as stated in the report.

**Written Communication** - Students will write using standard organization, sufficient idea development, strong sentence structure, and correct conventions of grammar, diction, and mechanics;

**Oral Communication** - Students will learn to create appropriately targeted communications that effectively use both verbal and nonverbal communication skills and applicable communication strategies;

**Science** - Students will understand the scientific method well enough to use and interpret experimental results in a given set of data;

**Global Citizenship** - Students will understand the American political system, identify responsibilities of citizenship, recognize ideological differences, and include ethical considerations in personal, political, and social endeavors;

**Math** - Students will interpret and decipher information presented in mathematical form, use mathematical operations, and be able to effectively analyze quantitative data;

**Cultural Literacy** - Students will demonstrate an understanding of the individual’s relationship to local, regional, and global communities.

The institution then devised rubrics to represent the various levels of competency for each GELO: Introduce, Reinforce, and Assess. The faculty reviewed all courses to determine where each of these levels is situated, and “*This information is now included in each official course description that is approved by the Curriculum Committee.*” Using a spreadsheet created by MCC’s Research Analyst, the GELO teams can use this information to identify assessment artifacts.

Subsequently, the Assessment Committee created a new assessment schedule based on information received from the assessment consultant, who had been working with the respective GELO teams. The updated schedule, which extends through Spring 2023, is shown below.

Goal	Fall 19	Spring 20	Fall 20	Spring 21	Fall 21	Spring 22	Fall 22	Spring 23	Fall 23	Spring 23
Written Communication	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess
Oral Communications	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess
Math	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan
Science	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review
Global Citizenship	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score
Humanities	create	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan	Assess	Score	Review	Plan

The final section of the report related to General Education Assessment is titled “Revised General Education Assessment Process,” and describes how the current process works, culminating in GELO team review of the various artifacts. The report provides a brief overview of this activity, noting that some time was devoted to ensuring inter-rater reliability before turning to the artifacts themselves. The assessment reports from Spring 2019 are included in the appendices.

At this point the report begins its description of the “Revised Occupational Program Assessment Process,” citing the College’s continuing use of “*the State required Program Review of Occupational Education (PROE) to assess occupational programs.*” The State of Michigan requires that this take place on a five-year basis, but MCC undertakes this review on a three-year timetable. Here the report indicates that the College has also made the assessment process more comprehensive by adding a number of elements, including, but not limited to, job market data, articulation agreements, and program goal assessment results, among others. Program faculty members work with the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and advisory teams to assemble data used to create the final reports, which are shared with the advisory teams and the Assessment Committee.

The report acknowledges that, “*Not all faculty members are enthusiastic about assessment,*” which often has consequences with regard to “*follow through.*” To meet this challenge the faculty on the Assessment Committee created a policy to ensure that all faculty members would comply with stated assessment procedures. Here the report lists the four steps in the process.

*Step 1: Notification from AC of task and deadline.*

*Step 2: Reminder from AC if the deadline has passed and issuance of new deadline (responsible Dean is notified).*

*Step 3: Dean works with faculty member to meet deadline (if necessary).*

*Step 4: If second deadline is not met, Vice President for Academic Affairs issues a documented warning and a new deadline.*

The College collects section level assessment data at the end of every academic term; these data are aggregated by the Research Analyst and sent to department chairs, who review the data with their teams to determine the following, as stated in the report:

- *Strengths or positives*
- *Concerns or negatives*
- *Whether targets have been met and if they need to be revised*
- *Changes that need to be made to improve performance*

The final section of the report's narrative is titled "Where We Are Going," and makes specific reference to a November 2019 meeting of the General Education Advisory Committee, during which it became apparent "*that something was missing*" with regard to outcomes. Specifically, the Committee identified skills that included "*meeting deadlines, completing tasks without being told, and taking personal responsibility.*" An internal volunteer team has been working to develop this goal and submit it to the full Committee in Fall 2020.

**REPORT ANALYSIS:** Materials submitted in the MCC interim report indicate that the institution has made discernable progress with regard to assessing its general education program and in creating a more engaged assessment culture within the College.

The report's narrative provides a clear sense of the institution's history pertaining to general education assessment, noting the evolution of the general education learning outcomes (GELOs) and the development of a timetable/schedule that appears well considered and sustainable. The most recent version of the GELOs, which are shown in the Report Summary section above, reflects the College's continuing attention to the outcomes. Further evidence of this is offered in the last section of the report's narrative, where the document notes that the General Education Advisory Committee, in reviewing the outcomes, concluded that an addition outcome related to the general area of accountability was necessary.

Each GELO is overseen by an interdisciplinary team, which provides what appears to be an effective level of oversight for the respective outcomes in addition to supplying an important structural component to general education review. These teams were responsible for the development of rubrics by which the GELOs are measured. An excerpt from the "Written Communication" GELO is shown below as an example.

### **Written Communication**

#### *Learning Outcomes:*

1. Respond to a writing prompt directly, using standard organization for the task (organization).
2. Explain and sufficiently develop ideas (idea development).
3. Construct complete sentences that are well built and varied in structure (sentence structure).
4. Appropriately use the conventions of grammar, diction, and mechanics.

MCC Written Communication Rubric

	Effective	Adequate	Not Yet
Organization	Purposeful and effective pattern of development from beginning to end.	Competent: not compelling, but generally not confusing.	Haphazard organization.
Idea Development	Clear, focused main idea. Engaging, strong details and support	Evident main idea limited support and detail.	Lacks central idea minimal development.
Conventions & Sentence Structure	Clear, easy to read virtually error-free.	Generally clear occasional errors or lapses in fluency.	Frequent errors interfere with meaning.

With regard to assessment of the Occupational Programs, the report rightly cites the State of Michigan requirements, which mandate that assessment take place on a five-year rotation. To its credit, the institution has undertaken review on a three-year basis, with additional features to the assessments, as noted in the Report Summary section above.

Acknowledging that some faculty members were not fully engaged in assessment, the College set forth a policy to ensure that the entire faculty commit to the process. The four-step process is noted in the Report Summary section above. Although this process should ensure some level of compliance, the institution might consider development sessions/opportunities that emphasize the purpose and value of assessment, as well as its protocols.

**Analysis Concluding Statement:** Montcalm Community College has complied in virtually all respects with the interim report requirements listed in the Team Report of the College's 2017 HLC Comprehensive Evaluation. It is evident from the materials presented that the institution has established a system for assessing its revised general education learning outcomes (GELOs), and indications are that these outcomes are reviewed periodically to ensure currency and viability.

The documentation provided in the report indicates also that the College's Occupational Programs undertake assessment on a systematic basis, employing a three-year rotation rather than the five-year cycle mandated by the State of Michigan. While there is less information in the report about the Occupational Programs, the available materials show

that assessment is taking place in these instructional areas and that the resulting data are evaluated on a semester-by-semester basis.

The Higher Learning Commission acknowledges the institution's progress to date and will not require additional reporting on learning outcomes assessment. (Please see the Staff Finding section below.) However, given the recent nature of the changes in General Education assessment and lingering concerns about faculty engagement with assessment, it is essential that the College give continuing attention to Core Component 4.B. The institution should assume that the HLC Peer Review Team that conducts the College's 2022 Open Pathway review will examine carefully the its continued progress in the area of assessment. The Team will almost certainly wish to review recent assessment data from a wide range of programs and the institution's use of these data in making improvements to student learning.

**STAFF FINDING:**

Note the relevant Criterion, Core Component(s) or Assumed Practice(s): Core Component 4.B with regard to learning outcomes assessment.

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 Open Pathway Assurance Review is scheduled for 2022. The institution's next reaffirmation of accreditation is scheduled for 2027– 2028.