Program Review at Rio Salado College

Rio Salado College is a member of the Higher Learning Commission’s Academy for the Assessment of Student Learning. The College’s primary goal for joining the Assessment Academy was to develop and implement a more formal program review process. Over the past five years, the College has relentlessly developed, piloted, and improved upon its Program Review process.

Program Review at Rio Salado College is a systematic and comprehensive process, which is both sustainable and formal. At Rio Salado, a program is defined as a set of college-level courses resulting in a certificate or degree, and includes both occupational and academic programs. The types of certificates and degrees reviewed include an Associate in Applied Science, an Associate in Arts, a Certificate of Completion, and an Academic Certificate. The College also includes its General Education program in its Program Review cycle.

Rio Salado’s Program Review process contains a multi-level view of the program, which includes a comprehensive assessment of the College-level, program-level and course-level student learning outcomes. Data on the outcomes of both curricular and co-curricular services, such as the Library, Advising, Financial Aid, the Helpdesks, etc. are included in each program review. In addition, every Program Review contains the same foundational components, i.e. program goals, learning outcomes, and program resources, which are addressed by utilizing a 36 foundational questions template and the data sets. Once the review is complete and final report is written, members of the College’s Learning Assessment Team examine the Program Review and provide feedback on best practices (quality assurance) and areas of improvement (relentless improvement).

General Education Program

The General Education Program at Rio Salado College is comprised of numerous courses under various disciplines and housed in ten different departments. The College’s General Education Departments include: Biology; Counseling; English and Reading; Humanities and History; Languages; Library Science; Mathematics;
Physical Sciences; Psychology, Philosophy and Religious Studies; and Social Sciences.

For the purposes of this Program Review, 36 courses were selected as the snapshot of the College’s General Education Program. The courses were selected because they incorporate college-level assessment work and/or they are courses with significant enrollment. The chosen general education courses are displayed in Table 1. The General Education Program Review was conducted during the Fall 2010 term for fiscal year 2009-10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Selected General Education courses used as a snapshot of Rio Salado College's General Education Program.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Department</strong></td>
<td><strong>Courses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>BIO100 Biology Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>CPD102AB Career Exploration</td>
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<tr>
<td>English and Reading</td>
<td>CRE101 College Critical Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities and History</td>
<td>HIS103 United States History to 1865</td>
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<tr>
<td>Languages</td>
<td>SLG102 American Sign Language 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Sciences</td>
<td>IFS101 Information Skills in the Digital Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>MAT122 Intermediate Algebra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>CHM130 Fundamental Chemistry</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology, Philosophy and Religious Studies</td>
<td>PSY101 Introduction to Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>ASB102 Introduction to Cultural and Social Anthropology</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Purpose and Mission of the General Education Program**

The General Education Program at Rio Salado College is aligned with the mission and purposes of the Maricopa County Community College District General Education Curriculum:

*The general education core of the program of study for an associate degree or a certificate helps students develop a greater understanding of themselves, of their relationship with others, and of the richly diverse world in which they live. The general education experience provides students with opportunities to explore broad areas of commonly held knowledge and prepares them to contribute to society through personal, social, and professional interactions with others. General education fosters students’ personal development by opening them to new directions, perspectives, and processes.*

Through its general education requirements, the Maricopa County Community College District is committed to helping students develop qualities and skills that will serve them throughout their lives. General education opportunities encourage students to:

- Build self-awareness, self-respect, and self-confidence
- Recognize and respect the beliefs, traditions, abilities, and customs of all people and all cultures
- Consider the local, global, and environmental impacts of personal, professional, and social decisions and actions
- Access, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, and use information wisely
- Communicate effectively personally, socially, and professionally
Think critically, make informed decisions, solve problems, and implement decisions
Consider the ethical implications of their choices
Value the learning process throughout their lives
Integrate and connect ideas and events in a historical perspective, and see relationships among the past, the present, and the future
Develop a personal sense of aesthetics
Use technological resources appropriately and productively
Work cooperatively and respectfully with others to serve their communities

The general education experience at Maricopa County Community College District is composed of specific elements across the curriculum designed to provide the learner with essential knowledge and skills:

- Communication
- Arts and Humanities
- Numeracy
- Scientific Inquiry in the Natural and Social Sciences
- Information Literacy
- Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking
- Cultural Diversity

The College's Culture Page emphasizes the College’s shared Purposes, which specify General Education and courses for university transfer. Other College purposes supported by our General Education program include cultural enrichment, continuing education, and lifetime learning opportunities. In addition, the General Education Sustainability Learning Outcomes work supports Rio Salado’s Core Values.

Program Decisions and Action Plans

Program-level data in the following categories met the target and can be considered Quality Assurance:

- Student Goal Attainment
- Online Course Quality
- Student Evaluations of Instructors
- Faculty Peer Evaluations
- Course Retention

Some course-level data from the Online Course Quality Reviews did not meet the target, and may be an area of focus for Relentless Improvement. In an effort to
achieve Quality Assurance for our online courses across the board, five General Education Faculty Chairs are currently participating in Quality Matters training. As a result of this training, these Chairs will become Peer Reviewers, and they will apply the Quality Matters Rubric to selected online courses. Future plans include expansion of this program so that more Chairs complete the training, and more online courses undergo the Quality Matters Review Process.

Although a specific target has not been established for degree and certificate completers, this is an area that would most likely be identified for Relentless Improvement. The General Education Program will be included in the action plans generated by the college-wide Completion Agenda, and future data will be analyzed for next year’s Spotlight Report.

Adjustment of the targets does not appear warranted at this time, nor does the data indicate that a three-year focused review is necessary.

**Best Practices**

A best practice of the General Education program is interdisciplinary collaboration on common learning outcomes. The General Education Faculty Chairs agree on program-level learning outcomes that align with College-wide learning outcomes. Course-level learning outcomes work informs Program-level level outcomes work, which supports and expands the data available for College-level reporting.

College-wide Student Learning Outcomes work for the 2009-10 academic year focused on Critical Thinking and Writing, which were also adopted by the General Education Program and incorporated at the course level across the General Education curriculum. In addition to Critical Thinking and Writing, the General Education Program reported on Sustainability and Information Literacy learning outcomes. As of Fall 2010, Information Literacy has been adopted as an additional College-wide Student Learning Outcome. As a result of previous collaboration, the General Education Program is able to efficiently integrate course and program-level work to support this additional learning outcome.

**Future Reviews**

The General Education Spotlight Report for 2011-12 will focus on the RioPASS program, which is one of the interdisciplinary initiatives of our shared Completion Agenda. The next General Education formal program review is scheduled for the 2015-16 fiscal year.