

Adoption of an Assessment Management System

Recommendation to the Chancellor's Advisory Council Accreditation and Assessment Work Group and the Chancellor's Advisory Council August 2014

Assessment of student learning outcomes has become an important part of higher education and is destined to play a continuing role into the foreseeable future due to increased interest by government, students, and parents in the value of a college degree. In addition, changes to accreditation standards meant to enhance student learning and drive innovation in education have also increased. Kapi'olani Community College and its accrediting body, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, are not immune to the spread of these concerns.

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment at Kapi'olani Community College

To meet the demands of these stakeholders, Kapi'olani Community College began in earnest the assessment of course-level student learning outcomes (called "competencies") in spring 2011 after adoption of the Faculty Senate Course Level Assessment Plan in November 2010. Course competencies were mapped to program learning outcomes, course assessment plans were developed, and in subsequent semesters, course learning reports began to be submitted. As the College approached its 2012 Accreditation Self Evaluation Report of Educational Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, there was some concern that the College might not be able to clearly show that it was operating at the Proficiency level of student learning outcomes implementation.

Indeed, the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC), in addition to its commendations of the College, made nine recommendations for improvement, three of which pertained directly to student learning outcomes and their assessment:

Recommendation 3: In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College assess student learning outcomes for every course, instructional program, and student support program and incorporate the findings into course and program improvements.

Recommendation 4: In order to meet the Standards, the team recommends that the College utilize student learning outcomes assessment to support institutional planning decisions.

Recommendation 5: In order to fully meet the Standards, the team recommends the College: 1) identify student learning outcomes for all student services programs, 2) assess student attainment of these outcomes, and 3) conduct dialogue to use assessment results to implement program improvements.

In order to address these recommendations, the College redoubled its efforts and was able to make considerable gains in moving student learning outcomes assessment forward on campus. The ACCJC team visiting the College in October 2013, however, determined the College had only partially met the standards represented by these three recommendations (Appendix 1). The College is currently working towards further addressing the recommendations for an accreditation team visit in fall 2014.

Faculty Investment in Student Learning Outcomes Assessment

In response to the ACCJC recommendations, the College's Faculty Senate in spring 2013 conducted a student learning outcomes faculty survey, a student learning outcomes focus group, and a student learning outcomes faculty forum in order to gather faculty input on student learning outcomes and their assessment and on how the College could best support faculty student learning outcomes efforts on campus. Based on this faculty input, it was determined that the main issues were data, time, and uncertainty: Data were not easily accessible (because they were locked up in hundreds of word processed documents rather than in an electronic database); time was being excessively consumed by the assessment and documentation process; and uncertainty existed about the whats, hows, and whens of doing assessment. Faculty solutions centered around data sharing, data gathering, and data warehousing (Appendix 2).

To this end, in August 2013 the College's Faculty Senate charged its Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee with identifying ways that student learning outcomes assessment functionality could be built into the Quali Student Curriculum Management software that was to be adopted system-wide as a replacement for Curriculum Central. This approach seemed at the time to be likely to result in the most efficient and cost effective approach, since the curriculum management system would already contain all course competencies, maps to program outcomes, and other pertinent data, and a system-wide approach would bring other efficiencies along with it.

Over the course of the fall 2013 and spring 2014 semesters, the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee interviewed assessment management system users in the field, hosted presentations by assessment office personnel from UH Manoa and other UH community colleges, viewed various assessment management system vendor webinars, surveyed a number of Accreditation Liaison Officers and Institutional Analysts in California and the Pacific, sought input from departments through committee representatives, discussed necessary and desired assessment management system features, and compiled a list of student learning outcomes

assessment functionality requirements to be incorporated into the Kuali Student Curriculum Management software (Appendix 3). In addition, the Committee Chair participated in numerous electronic discussions and face-to-face meetings with the system-level team responsible for the implementation of the Kuali Student Curriculum Management software. However, despite the efforts of the Committee and the Chair, the majority of the community colleges in the system did not see the benefits of incorporating student learning outcomes assessment functionality into the Kuali Student Curriculum Management software, and this functionality was relegated to the lowest level of need (requirements of only one or two campuses), making it unlikely to be incorporated into the first iteration of the software, if at all.

Given this result, and the increasingly urgent need for a tool to facilitate assessment data collection and management, the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee in April 2014 turned its attention towards the consideration of a commercial vendor solution. In May 2014, the Committee submitted, and the Faculty Senate approved, a recommendation that an assessment management system be purchased and that a full-time coordinator be hired to manage it (Appendices 4 and 5).

The Assessment Management System Search

At the end of July 2014, a campus assessment stakeholders group meeting was held in order to consider the purchase of an assessment management system for the College (Appendices 6 and 7). The Chancellor had indicated that funding for such a system would be available if the stakeholders group believed the choice could be made by the end of August 2014. The group actively discussed the pros and cons of moving forward with a decision. There was discussion that CELTT did not have the resources to provide support and training and that the College should be sure to get off-site hosting and vendor support and training. The group felt that any work done by September 15 was necessary regardless of whether the procurement deadline was met or not, and that the College would use the work for the newly submitted Title III grant proposal that included an AMS and an AMS coordinator.

In a memo dated August 1, 2014, the Chancellor notified the outgoing and incoming Faculty Senate Chairs, the Chair of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee, the Co-Vice Chairs of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee (who were also the College's Assessment Coaches for Instruction), the College's Accreditation Liaison Officers, and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (the Assessment Management System Search Group) that funds were being allocated for the purchase, installation, training, and use of an assessment management system contingent upon these funds being "spent and / or encumbered by September 15, 2014" (Appendix 8).

The Assessment Management System Search Group assembled a Search Team consisting of the Chair of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee, the Co-Vice Chairs of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee (who were also the College's Assessment Coaches for Instruction), the College's Accreditation Liaison Officers, the Assessment Coach for Student Affairs, the Secretary of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee, and the College's ePortfolio Coach to help carry out the Chancellor's assignment to make a recommendation on the selection of an assessment management system. The recommendation would go to the full Chancellor's Advisory Council (CAC) Accreditation and Assessment Work Group and then to the CAC for review before being sent to the Chancellor. The Search Team met to discuss how to implement the Chancellor's request and it was decided to proceed with the selection and procurement process. If the September deadline for procurement could not be met, the selection of an AMS would continue in hopes of obtaining the funding of an October 2014 Title III grant proposal.

The Search Team developed a list of potential systems, gathered broader campus input on the criteria list by which the systems would be evaluated, provided the vendors with a list of needed functionality / criteria, and scheduled webinar presentations and a general debriefing session to take place across three days of the College's fall 2014 duty week period in August (Appendix 9). Announcement of the webinar and debriefing schedule was made to the campus community by the Office of the Chancellor via the campus-wide email UH Broadcast announcement system in mid-August (Appendix 10). This announcement included a link to the functionality / criteria list previously compiled by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee for faculty, administrator, and staff review prior to the webinar series. The five systems (in order of presentation) were Taskstream, Tk20, TracDat, LiveText, and eLumen. These five systems were chosen due to their prominence in the assessment management system arena. Taken together, they provide assessment management solutions for over 1,500 institutions in the US and abroad.

Each vendor was allotted a 90-minute time slot, which included time for audience questions. The vendor presentations were interactive, with audience members frequently interspersing questions. All the webinars were recorded for later viewing / reviewing. Prior to the webinars, all vendors completed an online survey in which they rated their system's ability to meet the functionality / criteria that had been developed by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee (Appendix 11). Vendors were also asked to provide references. After each webinar, attendees were given the URL of the same survey so that they could rate each system, as well. An average of 20 people attended each webinar presentation (38 unique attendees overall); a total of 17 attendees completed the online survey (Appendix 12).

At the end of the week, after webinars for each system had been presented, the debriefing session was held. Forty-three people were in attendance. The purpose of the debriefing session was to collect the opinions, viewpoints, and feelings of the webinar attendees about each of the systems / vendors. The Chair of the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee welcomed the attendees and explained the purpose of the debriefing. The Chair clarified that the results of the debriefing would not be considered a vote on the systems but would be used as input for a decision to be made at a later date. The session was facilitated by the College's ePortfolio Coordinator and by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee Secretary, both trained C4Ward Concierges. The debriefing session included three main tasks: prioritizing of functionality / criteria (which had been grouped into 10 categories), discussion of strengths and weaknesses of each system, and indication of system preferences.

To determine which functions of an assessment management system were deemed most important by the attendees, the facilitators lead the group through a prioritizing task. The 10 categories of functionality were listed on a poster, and attendees were asked to indicate the five functions most important to them by placing previously-distributed post-it dots next to their choices of important functions. The dots were color-coded to indicate college unit type: instruction, counseling, administration / service area, and instructional support. The result was a list of desired assessment management system functionality weighted by importance (from most to least), with some items deemed equal in priority:

1. Integrates external sources of data (Kuali, Banner, Laulima, etc.)
2. Supports non-instructional assessment
3. User friendliness & Training / tech support **(tie)**
4. Supports our campus's assessment processes
5. Shows alignment of outcomes for all relevant levels of the institution
6. Allows communication between system and users (e.g. reminders, etc.)
7. Integrates external standards (WASC, ACCJC, etc.) & Includes both vendor-provided and customizable reporting **(tie)**
8. Pricing

To discuss perceived strengths and weaknesses of each system, the facilitators asked attendees to talk about what stood out for them, indicate whether it was a strength or a weakness, and note any follow-up questions they had for the vendors. Discussion proceeded system by system in order of webinar presentation, with strengths and weaknesses recorded on separate sheets of poster paper for each system (Appendix 13).

Building on this discussion, and in order to get a clearer sense of whether any system preferences were emerging for the attendees as a group, the facilitators used a multi-poster matrix with the 10 categories of functionality on the horizontal axis and the five systems on the vertical axis. The facilitators again asked attendees to use post-it dots color-coded by college unit to indicate which system was strongest in which categories of functionality.

Attendees were also each given two bright green "deal-breaker" dots to be used to indicate what they perceived to be functionality, or lack thereof, that rendered a particular system as unusable for them. The result was a stunningly clear visual representation of the emergence of two preferred systems: Taskstream and LiveText (Appendix 14).

Deliberations

The Search Team began its deliberations on the weekend between duty week and the first day of instruction of fall 2014 by individually reviewing the evidence gathered during (and in some cases prior to) the search process:

- The functionality / criteria list compiled by the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee
- The video recordings of the Taskstream and LiveText webinars
- The functionality priority list created by attendees at the debriefing session
- The posters of the perceived strengths and weaknesses of Taskstream and LiveText that resulted from attendees' discussions at the debriefing session
- The online functionality / criteria survey completed by the Taskstream and LiveText representatives
- The online functionality / criteria survey completed by the Taskstream and LiveText webinar attendees
- Vendor references

The Search Team met on the first day of instruction to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the Taskstream and LiveText systems vis-a-vis the evidence gathered, including available vendor references (Appendix 15). After considerable discussion of both systems, the Team felt that the Taskstream system would provide the best fit for the College, given the College's original purpose for the system and the functional priorities that had been identified as most important by webinar attendees.

To confirm that the Taskstream system was indeed the best fit for the College, a second Taskstream webinar was scheduled to give the Search Team an opportunity to see the system in further detail, including the Learning Achievement Tools platform that would provide collection and storage of artifacts, online rubric scoring, internship data management, and other features. Faculty in the process of implementing LiveText for their Career and Technical Education programs were invited to the webinar. This webinar further solidified for the Search Team its decision that Taskstream is the best fit for the College's needs.

Decision

Both Taskstream and LiveText can (or will soon be able to) integrate with Banner and Laulima, allowing importing of data into the assessment management system. Both systems

provide for single sign-on functionality, allowing users to sign into the system using their UH credentials. Both systems also provide free online and video training, as well as online, phone, and email support for all users. And both vendors host the system on their own servers, maintain the systems, and provide free updates and unlimited data storage.

The systems differ in important ways, however, and the Search Team believes Taskstream is the best fit for the College for the following reasons:

- **Original purpose:** The quest for an assessment management system began with the consideration of building assessment functionality into the Quali Student Curriculum Management system that will be adopted system-wide to manage curriculum. Along with the criteria list developed for such functionality, the Faculty Senate Ad Hoc Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Committee noted that “The assessment management system should aid users to view course and program assessment plans, chosen assessment methods, and the impact of proposed changes or adjustments. Ideally, assessment data are presented in a way that encourages broad participation and meaningful discussion at the course, program, and institutional levels.” The Search Team believes that the Taskstream platform best serves this original purpose through:
 - The planning power of its Accountability Management System, which provides a robust curriculum planning map / matrix tool
 - The match between the Accountability Management System approach and the College’s current assessment processes
 - The possibilities for faculty (and lecturer) online discussion through an interface built in to each assessment area of its Accountability Management System
- **Functional priorities:** In the webinar debriefing session, faculty identified which functionalities were most important to them. Based on the vendor responses to the online survey, Taskstream best meets 3 of the 5 most important of these functionalities. As can be seen in Table 1 below, Taskstream better integrates external data (LiveText does not support imported data from Curriculum Central nor from Quali Student Management System), better supports non-instructional assessment (LiveText does not support assessment for library instruction nor for administrative services), and better supports the College’s current assessment processes (LiveText does not support our Course Assessment Plan [CAP] nor our Learning Assessment Schedule and Report [LASR]).

Table 1. Functional priorities comparison of vendor survey responses

Priority	Function	Survey item #	Taskstream response	LiveText response
1	Integrates external sources of data (Kuali, Banner, Laulima, etc.)	1f. System will accept imported data from Banner either automatically or manually.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
		1g. System will accept imported data from Curriculum Central database or Kuali Student Curriculum Management System or other source of curriculum information either automatically or manually.	Strongly Agree*	Disagree
2	Supports non-instructional assessment	5a. The system is appropriate to assess learning outcomes and service area outcomes for counseling	Strongly Agree	Agree
		5b. The system is appropriate to assess learning outcomes and service area outcomes for student affairs.	Strongly Agree	Agree
		5c. The system is appropriate to assess learning outcomes for library instruction.	Strongly Agree	Disagree
		5d. The system is appropriate to assess learning outcomes for tutoring.	Strongly Agree	Agree
		5e. The system is appropriate to assess service area outcomes for administrative services such as human resources and business office.	Strongly Agree	Disagree
3	User friendliness & Training / tech support (tie)	(User friendliness was not part of the survey.)	N/A	N/A

		7b. Tech support (phone, online and onsite) availability seems sufficient.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
		7c. Will there be sufficient consulting/training time during startup and implementation?	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
		7d. The vendor provides sufficient user training materials and support	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
4	Supports our campus's assessment processes	2a. System will support all elements of the course learning report (CLR).	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
		2b. System will support all elements of the course assessment plan (CAP).	Strongly Agree	Disagree
		2c. System will support all elements of the learning assessment scheduling and reporting form (LASR).	Agree	Disagree
5	Shows alignment of outcomes for all relevant levels of the institution	1c. System supports a catalogue of Gen Ed and Institutional outcomes.	Strongly Agree	Agree
		1d. System links and makes an alignment between course learning outcomes/competencies and program-level, Gen Ed and Institutional outcomes.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
		1e. System links and aligns program learning outcomes and Gen Ed and Institutional outcomes.	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
		3k. Supports a rubric-based option to assess outcomes/competencies. This function should include the ability to link assignments or exercises with stated learning	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree

		outcomes/competencies, create, establish expected level of achievement and score rubrics/matrices to assess those assignments/exercises, and allow interested parties (e.g. students) to access results.		
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* Subject to details of implementation integration

- Assessment Planning:** Assessment planning is an important part of student learning outcomes assessment at the College, and essential for meeting ACCJC standards. Prior to the introduction of the Learning Assessment Schedule and Report (LASR) in fall 2013, it was difficult if not impossible to get an at-a-glance picture of which courses would be assessing which competencies in which semester, particularly in the College’s largest program, Liberal Arts. Taskstream’s robust planning and reporting tools, including its curriculum planning map / matrix, allow faculty, staff, and administrators to create and access this information. In the LiveText webinar, the presenter makes a point of stating more than once that if assessment planning is a priority, there are better assessment planning systems available than LiveText. LiveText also does not have a curriculum map. A 2013 study by Oakleaf, Belanger, and Graham comparing several AMS systems confirms that LiveText does not support assessment planning (Appendix 16). A large part of the functionality the College is seeking in an assessment management system may be sacrificed by choosing LiveText.
- Campus assessment culture:** Faculty investment in and understanding of student learning outcomes assessment has increased on campus since course-level assessment began in 2011. The College has established processes in place. However, as evidenced by results of the 2013 faculty senate survey, focus group, and faculty forum, much progress needs to be made. This assessment led to the decision to select an assessment management system that would help improve on these established assessment processes. The Taskstream system is a better match for the College’s current culture surrounding assessment, since it provides a clear, familiar planning tool and supports the assessment processes currently in place (i.e., CAPS, CLRs, and LASRs), with implementation of the system expected to provide minimal disruption, but considerable improvement, to these established processes.
- Connecting assessment to needed resources and budget:** The connection between assessment and budget planning is important for the College. Taskstream supports budget and resource request tracking and integration with assessment data, allowing users to see, for example, budget requests across the institution and

see how many activities are involved in specific budget requests. LiveText does not include this functionality.

- **Service learning, field placement, and internship data:** The College is nationally recognized as a leader in service learning. In addition, many Career and Technical Education programs include clinical placements, internships, etc. This functionality would help the college manage the data generated from these activities. Both Taskstream and LiveText address the collection, tracking, and archiving of this data.
- **Additional Functionality:**
 - Our nomenclature: Taskstream allows for the customization of the titles, terms, etc. in workspace templates, which will allow the College to support current assessment maps, processes, forms, etc.
 - Assessment review: Taskstream has a feedback mechanism built into the system, which allows an assessment committee, assessment director, etc. to provide feedback on the assessment process to faculty and others who are undertaking the assessment, thereby improving the process and providing faculty with professional development. This functionality can also serve to demonstrate to ACCJC the strength of the College's assessment processes.
 - Customized accreditation-based reports: Taskstream provides templates for the major accrediting agencies and can custom-build templates for the College at no additional cost. These reports can be web-based or paper-based (pdf).
 - Management of strategic planning: Taskstream allows for mapping of strategic plan goals, objectives, and initiatives, which provides an at-a-glance view of these alignments and allows for alignments and connections to assessment data and activities across campus.
 - In-class performance-based assessment: The Taskstream Learning Achievement Tools allow for "live" assessment of student performance in class through its "non-submission" assessment tool, which can be used with an iPad or other tablet. (Also available in LiveText.)
 - Multiple evaluators: The Taskstream Learning Achievement Tools allow multiple evaluators to score a student assignment or an assessment submission, and provide functionality to calculate interrater reliability.

- Blind evaluation of student work: The Taskstream Learning Achievement Tools allow replacement of student names with random identifiers to facilitate blind evaluation of student work.

Cost

Taskstream was founded in 2000 (by an educator), and today provides services to over 500 client institutions in the US and abroad.

A subscription to Taskstream’s Accountability Management System (AMS) includes unlimited access, unlimited telephone and online technical, implementation, and consulting support to all users. Taskstream offers multiple AMS subscription options for the College:

Assessment Management System (AMS) annual subscription	\$22,000
Discounted annual price for AMS if purchased with LAT	\$19,500
Discounted price for three-year advanced purchase of AMS	\$54,000

A subscription to Taskstream’s Learning Achievement Tools (LAT) includes unlimited phone and online support and training. There are no start-up fees or fees for faculty, evaluators, or administrators. Taskstream offers multiple subscription models for the College:

Per student subscription price varies based on subscription length:

1 semester	\$25
1 year	\$42
2 year	\$69
3 year	\$91
4 year	\$105
5 year	\$119
6 year	\$129

Institutional purchase

Bulk purchase of 250 or more one-year accounts	\$40 per student account
Annual LAT site license for up to 500 students	\$15,000

Taskstream also offers optional services to enhance system implementation

On-site training, per trainer, per day	\$2,000
Optional entry of existing data into AMS (one-time fee)	\$3,000

A detailed price quote is available in Appendix 17.

Recommendation

Based on the evidence available, the Search Team recommends that the College adopt the Taskstream Accountability Management System (AMS) and Learning Achievement Tools (LAT) platforms for assessment data management and collection at the College.

Taskstream's Accountability Management System (AMS) will allow the College to identify and align student learning outcomes, create curriculum maps, build assessment plans and document results, and plan and track improvements based on findings.

Taskstream's Learning Achievement Tools (LAT) will allow the College to collect evidence of student learning; use ePortfolios to assess knowledge and skills; score student work with rubrics and forms; manage service learning, clinical placement, and internship data; and analyze performance by outcome or assignment.

Together, these two elements of the Taskstream system would put a powerful assessment tool in the College's hands that would allow it to take the next step in improving its established assessment processes through better management of assessment data, leading to enhanced student learning. Of course, any assessment management system will not do the work of assessment for the College. All areas of the College will need to embrace the spirit of assessment and help to nurture a culture of inquiry if we are to make student learning outcomes assessment a driver of enhanced student learning and a meaningful and useful endeavor on campus.

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