



Overview

INSTITUTION:

McHENRY COUNTY COLLEGE

PROFILE:

McHenry County College, located 45 miles northwest of Chicago, is part of the Illinois community college system and serves approximately 5,300 students.

CHALLENGE:

Establish a culture of assessment that incorporates real-time visibility into progress against goals and provide explicit documentation of the assessment process for a scheduled accreditation site visit.

SOLUTION:

McHenry County College chose TracDat to provide a methodical approach to implementation and management of the entire assessment process and to document how results are used to improve programs and learning.

TRACDAT BENEFITS:

- ✓ Supporting documents and evidence linked to the plan
- ✓ Real time visibility into the assessment process
- ✓ Monitor and report on progress
- ✓ Systematic approach establishes a common understanding and language
- ✓ Define and align goals among all levels of the institution and external accrediting agencies
- ✓ Robust reporting
- ✓ Integrate new strategies for continuous improvement
- ✓ Develop, review and revise assessment plan utilizing Web browser

McHenry County College Relies On TracDat To Facilitate Assessment Initiative

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Dr. Jim Gray, Vice President Learning/Student Support Services

In 2002, McHenry County College received their ten year accreditation confirmation from The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) with the expectation that the NCA would conduct a focused visit on assessment in 2005. This confirmation however was accompanied by an opinion from NCA that McHenry had not made sufficient progress toward incorporating a culture of assessment in their academic programs.

With less than three years to plan and execute a new strategy, McHenry's leadership team decided to reexamine the institution's entire approach to academic assessment.

Internal Realignment

The first step was to implement a new internal structure for managing the assessment initiative. McHenry established an assessment team led by an assessment chair, with at least 80% dedicated time to organize and manage the college-wide academic assessment efforts. Four Assessment Division Liaisons were appointed and charged with education and coaching responsibilities within the four academic divisions. The team established weekly meetings to plan assessment efforts with the Academic Vice President and liaisons from the Adult Education Department, the Department of Research and Planning, Faculty Development, Workforce Development, and Distance Learning.

In addition to establishing the team and defining the roles, responsibilities and relationships with the rest of the institution, McHenry had to negotiate contract provisions which would formally place accountability for program assessment coordination and reporting in the hands of the program chairs in conjunction with their department faculty.

The Missing Piece

As McHenry increased focus and attention on the assessment initiative, the team quickly discovered that collecting, analyzing, reporting and interpreting the data

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*- Kathy Chamberlain
Assessment Chair*

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“The Nuventive team has been a consistent and excellent resource for the college throughout the implementation process.”

*- Kathleen Plinske,
Interim Director of Distance Education
and Professional Development*

would become a limiting factor of the project. A growing number of assessment-related records were flowing into the department chair level and the team had no systematic process for managing the data and resulting information. In order to be successful, the college needed to adopt a comprehensive solution.

After completing a competitive review of potential solutions that would fulfill their needs McHenry County College selected Nuventive TracDat in the summer of 2004. “With our structure in place for assessment efforts, excellent training for our assessment team by Nuventive staff, and a commitment by the institution to centralize all assessment documentation for the 2005 NCA visit, 100% of all academic departments had assessment plans and results reported in TracDat within nine months of the TracDat purchase,” said Kathy Chamberlain, Assessment Chair.

In the spring of 2005, NCA conducted the focused review and concluded that McHenry had made significant progress in meeting and documenting the assessment program expectations of the NCA. “The TracDat Assessment Impact Reports that were provided by individual departments to the NCA team were noted in the NCA exit interview as an excellent documentation of the college’s achievement of a ‘culture of assessment,’” said Dr. Jim Gray, Vice President Learning/Student Support Services. He added that the observations of the NCA team regarding the Areas of Focused Strength stated, “The faculty and staff at McHenry County College have successfully implemented a culture of assessment that is a credit to the institution. The college provided the team extensive documentation of assessment activities that have been undertaken to collect and analyze data on student learning and student success. The support given in terms of personnel, processes, professional development opportunities and budget is laudable.”

After the successful NCA visit, McHenry County College took action to expand the use of TracDat in other departments across the institution. For example, all student services areas report their progress toward meeting departmental objectives in TracDat. In addition, in support of the College’s transition to the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), all continuous improvement action teams document their improvement efforts and how they align with the College’s Strategic Plan in TracDat. Furthermore, all academic departments and student services departments attach TracDat Assessment Impact Reports to their program reviews. “As an Interim Director of Distance Education and Professional Development, I see the implementation of TracDat as a major step toward using data as the basis for decision making across the institution,” said Kathleen Plinske. “This solution provides an excellent current and historical archive of assessment planning and results. The Nuventive team has been a consistent and excellent resource for the college throughout the implementation process.”

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