1: Project Goal

This project aims to validate our success as an institution of higher learning by establishing learning as a transparent developmental process. We embrace that good teaching is evidenced only by measured student learning. We endorse that a plan of learning is evidenced only by a premeditated process of (1) accurate entry-level assessment, placement and challenge, (2) embedded benchmarks for frequent feedback of student success and (3) achievement that is confirmed by stakeholders’ expectations of our graduates. Our student learning project seeks to make permanent and persistent a process of measuring and improving student learning throughout the University.

2: Reasons For Project

This project contends that a quality culture of student learning at Rio Grande has persevered AND can be more fully realized. A. OUR PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING We, the students, faculty, staff and administration of the University of Rio Grande and Rio Grande Community College believe... 1. All students can learn. To support this belief we can know who they are, where they come from and what they expect from their experience at Rio. 2. All students deserve opportunities to be challenged. We support this belief as we demonstrate and engage in an appreciation for reading, writing, scholarly debate and life-long learning. 3. All students thrive when they are empowered to construct meaning based on their past experiences and are introduced to new information. We support this belief when we provide experiences that enable them to develop a sense of self-efficacy. 4. All students benefit from an environment that consistently embraces learning. We support this belief when we review our programs and services to eliminate overlaps, fill gaps and clearly communicate expectations. 5. All students have the right to be valued as an individual and as a member of the campus community. We support this belief when we develop and demonstrate an appreciation for ethical behavior, diversity and community. 6. All learning is a contract between students and faculty within the context of the University. We support his belief when we hold students and faculty accountable for mutual respect and quality work together. 7. All students arrive with differential motives for learning. We support this belief by reviewing our programs, courses, syllabi, assignments and class activities to insure that we are teaching what is validated by professional organizations, philosophical perspectives and/or stakeholder needs. B. OUR COMMITMENT TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT ... will foster: the design and implementation of systems to measure student learning, course development, assessment and revision focused on student learning, the differentiation of methods to evaluate student learning at the course, program and institutional level. assessment of student learning in general education continuous improvement responsive to stakeholder needs C. OUR MEASURE OF STUDENT LEARNING Evidence of student learning will require transparent, supportive and valid information-gathering and thinking. Specifically, the University will establish a standard of system-wide learning assessment that reveals benchmarks for entry, process and outcome evaluation.

3: Organizational Areas Affected

Academic Disciplines – General Education – Assessment Committee – Academic Affairs Committee – Student Support Services
Key Organizational Process(es)

A: Marketing plan, academic and social learning, course specific presentation, course supportive activities, course scheduling, graduation as credentialing, alumni.

Project Time Frame Rationale

A: 1. Create a Center for Teaching and Learning that focuses on campus-wide development of pedagogy and rubrics. 2. A department of Institutional Research will serve as a clearinghouse for data. 3. Regular communication of AQIP Assessment activities via webpage PLUS/4. Organize workshops and community discussions. 5. Require annual reports to the Dean of the College and the Assessment Committee. 6. Create a syllabus template that will include guidelines for writing and revising course objectives, pedagogy and rubrics.

Project Success Monitoring

A: A. PRINCIPLES Conduct a semester conversion analysis. Since it is relatively recent (2001), how did it accomplish an improved learning environment/schedule? Study and develop best practices to create and sustain a motivational culture in the classroom on a daily basis and during the semester on a weekly basis to encourage student learning. Survey and analyze why students come to Rio? Why do students continue at Rio? When do students leave Rio? Prove continuous AQIP update. Continue campus process of learning the assessment of learning. Determine effective class size in developmental courses. B. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT Authenticate the transfer of general education outcome to discipline specific learning. Prove that objectives pursued and achieved in gen ed coursework is relevant, reinforced and prerequisite to coursework in major areas. Use Title III activities to develop enhanced assessment activities in coursework. Require evidence of descriptive pedagogy and published rubrics in all coursework. Develop benchmarks for oral and written communication, reading levels, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, resume development, computer literacy, ethics and citizenship/peer and supervisor interaction. Use assessment data systematically to alter classroom instructional practice and to prove that modified instructional methods improved student learning. Offer modules on teaching and learning process. Increase the use of diverse teaching strategies in the classroom. Determine appropriate placement testing schedule. Encourage placement assessment prior to beginning coursework. Conduct a review of our advising program. Explain intrusive support. C. MEASURES Publish/post our quantitative data collected or analyzed. Require external validation of learning outcomes in targeted areas. Develop and implement elements of a multi-faceted assessment process, ie. portfolio, placement testing, exit testing, post-grad follow-up, goal completion, satisfaction, promoting improvement and institutional effectiveness. Number of courses revised including the addition of General Education outcomes for the year. 6. Number of departments participating in discipline level assessment and program review processes.

Project Outcome Measures

A: 1. Increased levels of student satisfaction with courses taken. 2. Documented use of assessment data in improving course delivery, ie. faculty self-report. 3. Increase number of courses/programs incorporated into three-year review cycle. 4. Success rates in developmental writing and math exit exams. 5. Develop and select assessment tools for measuring student learning.

Project Update

1: Project Accomplishments and Status

A: During the summer of 2010 Dr. David Lawrence took over as URG/RGCC’s AQIP liaison and after reviewing this action project and the related annual updates, agrees with reviewer #9732 who, in his/her 09-29-07 review writes, “the University should consider reducing the scope of the action project identified in 2004. It may even be time to retire this project and begin again.” That said, work on this project continued on numerous levels but now includes these two major changes: First, Dr. Kenneth Porada, who began on July 1, 2010 as the new Provost and...
Vice President for Academic Affairs, has instituted a new procedure for Program Assessment and Program Review. Rio Grande’s new program assessment process asks faculty to engage in yearly assessment by assessing one “anchor” Program Student Learning Outcome (PSLO) and one other PSLO each academic year. Program faculty review institutional data related to their program and respond to it. Department and program faculty guide program assessment by identifying and using appropriate assessment tools and measures which specifically examine student learning. Second, Rio Grande has instituted a new, more extensive program review process that continues to involve school chairs, program faculty, members of the Assessment Committee, and the office of Academic Affairs, but now also includes external reviewers. Faculty review their programs on a five-year cycle and the process involves five related reports:

1. A self-study report, including the annual program assessment reports
2. An external review and report
3. A program’s response to the external reviewers’ report
4. A review by the Assessment Committee
5. An agreement with the Office of Academic Affairs about priority recommendations

The purpose of Rio Grande’s program review is to assure high quality programs, to determine the viability of programs, and to determine the adequate use of the program’s educational resources.

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<th>2: Institution Involvement</th>
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<td>A: Because of the scope of this project most of the campus community was involved. All faculty (full-time, part-time, and graduate) continued using the “mini-projects” in their classes. The Assessment Committee (consisting of one representative from each of the eight schools) continues to meet although the focus has moved from course assessment to program assessment.</td>
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<th>3: Next Steps</th>
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<td>A: As referred to above, we plan to move this project to completed status after the review process and develop new, more focused projects to take its place.</td>
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<th>4: Resulting Effective Practices</th>
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<td>A: Perhaps the best lesson other institutions can learn from this project is to keep the scope of the action project narrow enough, with clear steps and precise timelines, so progress can be maintained and measurable outcomes achieved. While the vision in the original action project description was admirable, the scope was too broad to be effective as a single action project. One other lesson would be to identify weaknesses in an action project earlier (preferably during the development stages before the project is formally declared) and make changes so success is more likely.</td>
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<th>5: Project Challenges</th>
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<td>A: None since we will be moving it to completed status after the review process.</td>
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Update Review

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<th>1: Project Accomplishments and Status</th>
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<td>A: Rio Grande's is to be congratulated for its decision to reduce the scope and scale of the assessment process it adopted in 2004; it is often difficult to change directions mid-process, but institutional agility and the capacity to recognize barriers to success are hallmarks of effective management. And clearly Rio Grande’s administration</td>
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recognized that, while its focus and commitment to **continuous improvement** and **student learning** had not changed, its process needed to.

That said, the college may want to consider whether its revised approach is, in fact, more fragmented than it might need to be. Selecting one PSLO and one anchor PSLO from each program certainly improves the project's focus at the departmental level, but it may be difficult for faculty to extract from their learning models a single objective that in practice operates in concert with a variety of others. Would it be more effective, for example, for the institution as a whole to assess its students' writing skills during one annual review process? Then perhaps assess students' quantitative skills the following year? Coordinating meta-assessment processes across campus supports collaborations across disciplines, establishes efficiencies, and moves the institution forward in measurable and focused ways.

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### 2: Institution Involvement

#### A:

Effective assessment requires **collaboration (Principle #9)** across disciplines and stakeholders; clearly the college has established an inclusive system and process that brings together its stakeholders to accomplish their shared goals.

### 3: Next Steps

#### A:

The most important outcome of this project has been institutional discovery around the relative inefficiency of its original assessment model. AQIP principles support and celebrate the kind of institutional **learning, agility, foresight** and **integrity** that would prompt the college to recognize its deficiencies and take strong steps to address them; the new project -- focused on programmatic and regular assessment -- is a positive improvement over its predecessor and is more likely to produce the outcomes the institution seeks.

### 4: Resulting Effective Practices

#### A:

While it is the case that earlier detection and action would have been preferable, the institution’s new academic leadership has moved quickly and energetically to get the project back on track. New approaches and a new time frame within which assessment will occur are important improvements, and the college’s next action project is likely to be far more successful and efficient in the institution’s efforts to improve its learning outcomes.

### 5: Project Challenges

#### A:

The college has addressed the project's challenges in an effective and efficient way.