
Action Project

Institution: Highland Community College
Submitted: 2006-10-13 **Contact:** Jeff Davidson
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 10-15-2006

Target completion date: 10-15-2009

Actual completion date: --

A. Give this Action Project a short title in 10 words or fewer:

A Common Student Intake System

B. Describe this Action Project's goal in 100 words or fewer:

The goal of this project is to create an integrated student services program that provides students with streamlined and user-friendly access to admissions, course placement, and advising services. The common intake system will improve our satisfaction rates with student intake services, increase our yield of prospects that enroll, and improve access to our front-end career and advising services.

C. Identify the single AQIP Category which the Action Project will most affect or impact:

Primary Category: Helping Students Learn

D. Describe briefly your institution's reasons for taking on this Action Project now -- why the project and its goals are high among your current priorities:

For many years the college has discussed the idea of an “alpha” or one-stop environment that could assist students in a convenient and user-friendly way. The College firmly believes that an improvement in our front-end service to students, many of whom lack a clear understanding of the traditional college enrollment process, would result in an increase in the number of students served and in the accuracy of their placement within the curriculum. These front-end services lay the groundwork for improved retention and student success. This fall the College enrolled 12% of the potential students that inquired through the admissions office. With a declining

number of students enrolled, the College needs to proactively recruit and retain a higher percentage of the prospects that inquire. In our FY05 alumni survey, graduates express a 87.5% satisfaction rate with career counseling, 81.1% satisfaction with transfer counseling, and 88.9% satisfaction with the financial aid services, 90.8% satisfaction with admissions counseling, and 93.5% satisfaction with academic advising. Additionally, some of our programs, such as adult education, currently handle intake separately at the department level. Consequently, for some students attempting to enroll, the process lacks consistency and clear identification with the institution. In an environment with a declining college-bound population and with a high percentage of the students placing into one or more developmental classes, initial enrollment and placement is critical to our ongoing success and retention of the students we serve.

E. List the organizational areas - -institutional departments, programs, divisions, or units -- most affected by or involved in this Action Project:

1. Admissions and Records 2. Student Resources – Advising and Career Center 3. Financial Aid 4. Learning Assistance Center (placement testing) 5. Marketing and Community Relations 6. Adult Education 7. Business Office

F. Name and describe briefly the key organizational process(es) that you expect this Action Project to change or improve:

1. Market research 2. Recruitment 3. Advising 4. Career Assessment and Counseling 5. Financial aid and payment 6. Placement 7. Matriculation of students into additional programs

G. Explain the rationale for the length of time planned for this Action Project (from kickoff to target completion):

This is a second stage of this project's development. Last year the president convened an "alpha center task force" to begin to analyze the current college processes related to intake, placement, and student success; propose a revised process that maximizes student services resources and uses data to define problems and measure success; and develop a common institutional intake system.

Following a retreat that solidified the goals and expected outcomes of a common intake system, phase two is being launched. Phase 2 is the re-engineering and implementation phase of this project. Because the College is going to re-engineering its entire front-end processes, there will be benchmarking of other institutions operating in an integrated model. Intensive training and detailed planning must occur. Positions within the College, locations of service, and hours of service may be affected. The College community understands that this is a complex process and also understands our need to move forward with expediency. To that end, we have allocated three-years for the completion of this project. We expect the third year to be comprised of evaluation, assessment and refining the process.

H. Describe how you plan to monitor how successfully your efforts on this Action Project are progressing:

A detailed project timeline will be developed that includes deadlines for work team progress reports and completion of assignments in the re-engineering plan. The timeline will be monitored and progress reported campus-wide through the Blackboard course management tool, updates to the College Cabinet and leadership team. Student satisfaction surveys will be monitored regularly and student feedback will be incorporated into the planning and the assessment of progress. Additionally, maintaining a high level of

involvement from the campus community and student service providers will be assessed through work team minutes and attendance records.

I. Describe the overall "outcome" measures or indicators that will tell you whether this Action Project has been a success or failure in achieving its goals:

The overall outcome desired is minimum increase of an 8% in student satisfaction with the career counseling and financial aid and a minimum increase of 5% in admissions counseling and academic advising as indicated by the alumni survey.

J. Other information (e.g., publicity, sponsor or champion, etc.):

This project has been assigned to a project leader within the institution and 100% of the student services staff is engaged in the implementation planning process. This project will involve a broad spectrum of the College community and received overwhelming support at a recent College in-service in which faculty and staff were asked to discuss and propose potential action projects. Ten of the 12 groups reported that the alpha center was a top priority for AQIP action. Internal communication is extremely important when managing significant change, and the College will continue to provide written and verbal updates regularly as well as opportunities for involvement.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2008-08-22

A. Describe the past year's accomplishments and the current status of this Action Project.

There were many key implementations for our common intake system this year. Most visibly, the College built a new testing lab located in the same area as our academic advising services. This new lab is now being used for daily placement testing. Previously the college published a schedule of placement testing dates and prospective students were required to test on a select date. The added convenience of our new lab has also been a catalyst for making other changes to the intake process. Advising is now offered on a walk-in basis for new students as well, which allows the advisors to help students interpret the placement test results immediately or schedule a follow-up appointment while the prospective student is on campus as opposed to mailing results and requiring the prospect to call for a follow-up appointment. The physical changes were also reflected in a new personnel structure. The new team of student

information specialists began rotating from the admissions and records office to the student resources center (advising and testing area) on a daily basis to provide increased interaction with prospective students. During this time, specialists are also charged with contacting prospective students on their “flexible caseload” to aid prospective students with the enrollment process. During the spring semester the director of learning resources launched an exploratory task force of English faculty and staff to consider using automated writing evaluations offered through the ACT Compass system. The automation would allow staff to streamline and speed-up the process of providing placement results for prospective students. The task force agreed to pilot the new test this fall, and the director of learning resources worked with the director of institutional research to develop an evaluation plan. A dozen student services and academic staff completed a second Creating Quality Service class. The training sessions included dealing with change, understanding service standards, practicing customer service techniques and learning to document processes. This class allowed us to expand the number of staff people receiving customer service training initially delivered to 20 staff last year.

Review (08-27-08):

This action project, Common Student Intake System, has completed two of the three planned years. The major accomplishment of this project included the building of a new testing lab. This supports AQIP Category 1, Helping Students Learn. Other improvements were forthcoming as a result of this. Student testing is now offered “on demand” with immediate test results available to them. Students can also walk in to meet with advisors by-passing the need to schedule appointments. These improvements save time for all involved and provide the quality of service, students have come to expect. College staff have been rotated from the admissions and records offices to the new Student Resource Center. This has made increased interactions with perspective students possible. A second quality serve class was conducted for 12 college employees. All of these efforts target the stated project goals of increasing student admission yield, satisfaction and retention.

B. Describe how the institution involved people in work on this Action Project.

Our implementation team continued to meet this year to coordinate efforts and monitor progress. Meetings were also held frequently for the advising team and the student information specialists to coordinate implementation efforts. Updates were provided at the opening days held for all staff and faculty and question and answer sessions. The common intake system was also used as a case study in the fall opening days training on process identification. This training was provided for all faculty and staff and provided a venue for updating and sharing the goals of the project. During the annual feedback/performance review process, student information specialists were engaged in discussion about the service standards and the common intake system changes. Feedback was reviewed by project leaders. Because this is a significant change for the staff in our admissions and records, financial aid, and advising areas, we continue to be challenged by looking for effective motivational tools and techniques. It has been important to provide as many opportunities as possible for honest reflection and feedback. Whenever possible, we have engaged staff in the decisions that effect their work life such as rotation scheduling and allocation of duties. We continue to strive to develop a sense of ownership for processes within the areas

affected by the change.

Review (08-27-08):

The college continues to do a very good job of keeping its constituents informed of the project's progress. In particular, the implementation team, advising team and student information specialists met to coordinate the project implementation efforts. Information concerning the project's progress was also shared on opening days for faculty and staff as well as at various question and answer sessions. It is impressive that the common intake system was used by the college as a case study in their fall opening days training on process identification. During the annual feedback/performance review process, the student information specialists conducted discussions on standards and the common intake system. The efforts being made to develop a sense of ownership of processes within areas affected by change is commendable. The college continues to look for effective motivational tools and techniques.

C. Describe your planned next steps for this Action Project.

Our FY09 goals are identified as the following: Outcome - Increased fall to fall retention * Continue our commitment to the early alert and College Student Inventory pilot projects and evaluate their effect on retention – Two pilots will continue during the fall 2008 semester under the leadership of the director of learning services. The director of learning services and director of institutional research will evaluate spring 2009. * Expand pilot on-campus registration and advising for high school seniors as a strategy to increase first-year advising and evaluate the effects on retention and student progress – Under the leadership of the dean of enrollment services and advising team this will occur during spring 2009 registration. *Integrate strengths based advising approach into academic advising sessions beginning in the spring 2009 semester under the leadership of the dean of enrollment services and advising team. Outcome - Increased yield of inquiries * Integrate adult education students into the Common Intake System. Extensive planning is taking place among the implementation team members including the director of adult education under the leadership of student services. One student information specialist has been assigned as process owner. This implementation will take place in July 2009. * Implement tools for immediate feedback to assess student satisfaction during enrollment during fall 2008 semester. These tools will be used to evaluate and inform adjustments in intake processes.

Review (08-27-08):

The planned next steps focus on two outcomes: (1) increase fall to fall retention and (2) increased yield of inquiries. To accomplish the first outcome, the college will continue its commitment to the early alert and College Student Inventory pilot projects and evaluate their effect on retention. The directors of service learning and institutional research will evaluate these efforts in the spring of 2009. Also, the dean of enrollment services and advising team will integrate a strengths based advising approach into academic advising. Concerning the second outcome to increase the yield of inquiries, one means to achieving this is to integrate adult education students into the Common Intake System. Planning for this is under the leadership of the director of adult education with one information

specialist as the process owner. The plan is to accomplish this by July of 2009. Another means to accomplishing this objective is to increase student satisfaction with the enrollment process. An assessment of this is planned for the fall, 2008 semester. The evaluation of this may lead to intake adjustments.

D. Describe any "effective practice(s)" that resulted from your work on this Action Project.

We believe that this new system for recruiting and retaining students will be an excellent presentation for other schools. However, because this is such a vast change to our operations, we believe we need results at the time of presentation. Within the next six to nine months, we will have data to report such as effect on our yield of student inquiries.

Review (08-27-08):

The college has reported the same comments concerning "effective practice(s)" as in the previous year. Should these efforts at improving retention and increasing student yield be successful, the new system will provide a very useful presentation for other schools. The AQIP Share Fair at the annual Higher Learning Conference can provide an excellent venue for this.

E. What challenges, if any, are you still facing in regards to this Action Project?

We believe this project is on track. We are working to develop more specific performance measures and welcome any feedback on this topic. We have been looking for appropriate resources for benchmarking peer institutions recruitment data. Retention data is less problematic as institutions are required to report data to the Illinois Community College Board and IPEDS.

Review (08-27-08):

This information is the same as the previous year. How has the data available from the Illinois Community College Board as well as IPEDS been useful to the College? Has the college located any assistance in the AQIP Project Directory? Other useful tools might include the data provided by the Consortium for Student Retention Data Exchange at the University of Oklahoma or via the IPEDS Executive Peer Tool and Peer Analysis System.

F. If you would like to discuss the possibility of AQIP providing you help to stimulate progress on this action project, explain your need(s) here and tell us who to contact and when?

Other than the assistance mentioned above, we believe we are on track with this project.

Review (08-27-08):

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