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## Action Project

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**Institution:** Highland Community College  
**Submitted:** 2008-03-31                      **Contact:** Jeff Davidson  
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### Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 04-15-2008

Target completion date: 04-15-2009

Actual completion date: --

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

Defining Key Processes and Performance Indicators

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

To define and structure the college's key processes so that their linkages and interrelationships are clear To select from this structure approximately 20 key processes or sub-processes important to achieving the college's mission and goals, better define each of them and establish their key performance indicators. To set the stage for further systematic selection and improvement of other key college processes. While accomplishing this process work, to increase the number of college faculty staff and administrators skilled in using quality improvement tools.

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

Primary Category: Planning Continuous Improvement

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:

The college received its System Portfolio Feedback in February of 2007 and attended its second Strategy Forum in October of 2007. As a result of this input it was clear that the college can make great strides in its quality improvement efforts by better defining its key processes/sub-processes and identifying key performance indicators for these processes. In addition it became clear that to few college

staff were knowledgeable in process mapping and selection of performance indicators. Clearly for substantial progress to occur in the college's quality improvement efforts, more staff needs to be trained in the use of selected quality tools.

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

Since the goal of this project is to focus on better defining college key processes/sub-processes and identify key performance indicators, essentially all areas of the college will be affected with the exception, to some extent at this time, of the custodial/maintenance department, and the college foundation.

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

Process by which teams define key processes (steps, who involved, timelines) Process by which teams identify key performance measures for processes. Process to train staff in the use of selected QI tools.

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

To better define college key processes/sub-processes is a continuous ongoing activity. However, since the college's AQIP checkup visit is scheduled for spring 2009, we would like to better define approximately 20 processes with at least one from each AQIP category. We believe that 10 teams working over the next year should be able to accomplish this goal.

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

The progress of this action project will be monitored by a team consisting of the AQIP Steering Committee Co-Chairs, the Director of Institutional Research, and the Associate Vice President of Student Services. In addition, progress reports will be periodically made to the college leadership cabinet and quarterly to the college's board of trustees.

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 primary outcome measure will be that the college has better defined approximately 20 college processes and has formally identified outcome measures for these processes. An additional primary outcome will be achieving a systematic overall process for defining, linking and interrelating all key college processes. A secondary outcome will be that a minimum of 50 college faculty, staff and administrators will receive additional training in the use of selected QI tools and that a minimum of 50 such staff will work on the 10 process improvement teams.

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

This action project is specifically related to several of the quality improvement campaigns which the college developed as a result of the second strategy forum that it attended.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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### **Annual Update: 2008-08-28**

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

A college team attended a second strategy forum in October 2007. Identified one college QI campaign in the category of measuring effectiveness. Following an all faculty and staff workshop on continuous quality improvement in January 2008 that was facilitated by an external consultant and well received as indicated by survey data, a series of more in-depth coaching sessions were developed and delivered during spring 2008. Ten quality improvement teams were formed and approximately 50 faculty and staff participated in the sessions. This represents well over a third of the college's full-time employees. Each team worked to define or better define a process central to the achieving the college's mission and goals. For each process, the teams drafted a charter document, key performance indicators, and a process map. The teams also worked together with the consultant to develop a comprehensive college process schematic that categorizes sets of processes and makes clear their linkages and interrelationships. Following the series of coaching sessions, the co-chairs of each team met to discuss the most important and helpful concepts and principles learned through the sessions, the biggest challenges in utilizing the material and tools presented, and other key considerations to think about moving forward. Much of the input and feedback received is being used to plan a second set of sessions to take place this fall.

#### ***Review (09-02-08):***

The college initiated an all faculty and staff workshop on continuous quality improvement that was validated by an assessment survey. This workshop along with the subsequent in-depth coaching sessions shows a strong commitment to building a culture of assessment. These actions relate to several AQIP categories: Valuing People (#4), Leading and Communicating (#5), and Building Collaborative Relationships (#9). Congratulations on involving over one third of the college's full-time employees with these initial activities. It will be important to celebrate successes along the way to help maintain this momentum and continue to create buy-in from the rest of the institution by providing additional opportunities to participate in the project. The college has made good progress with the assistance of the consultant in developing a comprehensive college process schematic to categorize sets of processes and make linkages and interrelationships more clear. These relate to the Supporting Institutional Operations (#6), Measuring Effectiveness (#7), and Planning Continuous Improvement (#8). The co-chair sessions show deliberate thoughtful conversations are happening and that the information is being used to plan the next steps in the project.

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

Awareness of the importance of process definition and improvement was generated at the all faculty and staff workshop in January 2008 and everyone was encouraged to participate on a process team through an invitation sent by the College President. Those participating represented almost every major area of the college. Have college wide participation not only benefited the quality of the work being done on the teams, it also facilitated the communication of progress each work team made. In addition, because some of the sessions were exclusively for the co-chairs of the ten teams, there were many opportunities for the teams to share their work. The college process schematic, in particular, helped the teams understand how the inputs and output of one process may impact or be dependent upon another. This interdependency motivated communication.

##### **Review (09-02-08):**

The invitation from the president made a statement of the college's leadership commitment to this project. The involvement of the first set of participants emphasizes the effort the institution has made in building collaborative relationships as well as in learning how processes affect one another. This communication has resulted in improved understanding of institutional operations.

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

As noted above, plans are being made for a second series of process teams this fall. While the co-chairs of ten teams will remain relatively unchanged, the members of the teams may change as the additional processes to work on are identified. Given the knowledge gained from their experience with the first set of processes, the co-chairs are ready to work more independently with their teams – their work will be less focused on learning concepts and principles and more focused on defining additional processes, and identifying performance measures. This work will begin in mid September and should be completed in December 2008. A third series of process teams will continue this work in the spring 2008.

##### **Review (09-02-08):**

The second series of process teams is a logical next step for this Action Project. Maintaining the current co-chairs will provide consistency and continued leadership with the project. A change in some team members will provide a great opportunity for others in the college to get involved and support the project. The college has made progress by moving from learning concepts and principles to identifying processes and appropriate performance measures. The co-chairs should be commended for their commitment to the project and their readiness to work more independently with their teams.

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

We believe that we re making good progress in better defining our key processes and identifying performance measures but we are not ready to present our efforts or results yet.

##### **Review (09-02-08):**

The college felt it was making good progress in better defining key processes and identifying performance measures, but it did not feel it was ready to present their efforts or results yet. I would encourage the college to be proud of the accomplishments they have made and be bold about sharing them. Creating a culture of assessment requires institutions to be comfortable with the conversations. The college has to start somewhere. By not sharing the initial processes and key performance measures thus far, the college missed a great opportunity to gain some initial feedback as they start their second series of process teams. I encourage the team to seek some feedback of their initial processes prior to the scheduled check up visit and to celebrate the incremental successes. By learning to be comfortable with having the conversations, the college community can begin to embrace the essence of what a culture of assessment is all about.

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

We have made great strides from where we were in getting college staff to understand the notion of process and the importance of having processes well defined and stable as well as has having performance measures identified for processes. However, most college staff is still in the novice stage of defining processes. A great deal of talk and time is required for the teams to achieve a process map. Hopefully we will move faster and more efficiently with our second round of process teams this fall.

**Review (09-02-08):**

The college is to be commended on this Action Project. It is not easy to begin to educate an entire college community regarding process and performance measures. The faculty and staff have laid the foundation by providing college-wide training and work groups to establish some initial process maps. I encourage the Action Project team to celebrate its successes at critical steps. This will help build momentum and may also encourage others who may not be as familiar with assessment to not be afraid to participate. One suggestion might be to try and provide varied methods of teaching process and process mapping to ensure that pedagogy is not hindering progress. Perhaps having staff discuss process and performance indicators at their professional conferences might also provide another avenue for them to become comfortable with the language of assessment and gain insight into doing this type of work. Having teams share successes and ways of learning the process might also help struggling teams achieve their goals as well. Keep up the momentum!

**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?**

We are not requesting any assistance from AQIP for this project at this point in time. We are scheduled for an AQIP quality checkup visit in March 2009 and have requested team expertise in category 7.

**Review (09-02-08):**

The college is scheduled for an AQIP quality checkup visit in March 2009, and they have requested team expertise in category 7 –

Measuring Effectiveness. This seems appropriate given the stage of the Action Project.