
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:

Contact Name: Liz Gerber, Director of Community Relations
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Annual Update: 2009-09-09

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

1. A pilot early warning system for academically at-risk students was continued during FY09. 2. Utilized faculty involvement to evaluate ACT's eWrite product to perform automated writing evaluations offered through the ACT Compass system. The director of learning resources, director of institutional research and dean of humanities and social sciences developed the evaluation plan. Based on this evaluation the college began using eWrite during the Fall 2009 intake and registration for writing course placement. 3. Financial aid cross-training was conducted to ensure that all frontline staff can answer general financial aid questions. 4. Began a series of adult education trainings to prepare student information specialists to entertain adult education questions. 5. Completed cross-training for the placement testing process. 6. Signage was changed to reinforce that all of our frontline staff are cross-trained to handle general admissions, financial aid, and registration questions. 7. Implemented a point of service satisfaction survey in the enrollment services and financial aid area to inform continuous quality improvement. 8. Reorganized the enrollment services area to allow for a part-time outreach position and to transition one part-time student information specialist position to full-time. 9. Centralized inquiries for credit and community education in the admissions office. 10. Revised the College tour program to allow for greater tour guide

accountability and a higher quality tour program that included follow-up communication. 11. Initiated an on campus registration event for specific high schools as a strategy to increase the number of first year advising appointments. Administered point of service surveys for the advising team that was piloted during high school registration to help assess the effectiveness of this practice. 12. Contracted with an answering service to capture night and weekend inquiries. 13. Integrated project's performance standards into the employee performance review/feedback process.

Review (09-20-09):

This Action Project is nearly complete and continues to make continual improvements with the scheduled end date of October 15, 2009. The establishment of the Common Student Intake System at Highland Community College has employed several of AQIP's Principles of High Performance Organizations including Focus (by carefully outlining the goals for the project), People (through the involvement of multiple people that represent the larger campus community), Continuous Improvement (through the refinement of the system as new emergency notifications are implemented), and Helping Students Learn (by connecting students with key services in a single stop) As with all AQIP projects, developing a clear project plan is an essential element to success. Based on this report, Highland Community College established a set of projects to accomplish during this year including: 1. Pilot early warning system for academically at-risk students 2. Evaluate act's ewrite product 3. Provide financial aid cross-training with all frontline staff 4. Prepare student information specialists to entertain adult education questions. 5. Cross-train staff for the placement testing process. 6. Create signage to emphasize that all of our frontline staff are cross-trained to handle general admissions, financial aid, and registration questions. 7. Implement a point of service satisfaction survey 8. Reorganize the enrollment services area. 9. Centralize inquiries for credit and community education in the admissions office. 10. Revise the college tour program. 11. Initiate an on campus registration event for specific high schools as a strategy to increase the number of first year advising appointments. 12. Contract with an answering service to capture night and weekend inquiries. 13. Integrate project's performance standards into the employee performance review/feedback process. Highland Community College has demonstrated the ability to monitor project success through the collection of data and comparing it with current institutional data. As part of the reflection process for the AQIP project, the project team should be encouraged to continue this process.

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

During this final year of the action project, we continued to update faculty and staff in opening day's presentations, through small group meetings and postings on the faculty/staff web site, CougarNet. The specialists and advisors met in cross-training sessions and in team meetings on a regular basis, which helps to build a strong working relationship. These meetings benefitted both groups by including program updates from the academic administration. Common Intake action project goals were incorporated into the annual college-wide goals. Because of this level of visibility, the action project continued to receive broad support and regular reporting opportunities at the Cabinet level. Additionally, certain aspects of our work this year required faculty participation.

Review (09-20-09):

The project sought broad based involvement including members from the campus community. The project team provided updates

through opening day's presentations, small group meetings, and postings on the faculty/staff web site, CougarNet. In addition, the staff directly impacted through the Common Student Intake Project continued to meet on a regular basis in cross training sessions. The group demonstrates valuing people (AQIP Category 5) by providing wide participation throughout the college. The institution is encouraged to "capture" the effective communication strategies for future projects within the college.

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

Although we are near the end of the three-year action project, the implementation team and staff believe there is still work to be done. This process did achieve the goal of infusing a continuous quality improvement culture in the team. We continue to assess our processes and environment in order to achieve the best possible intake system. We intend to continue administering the point of service surveys and are planning to implement the SENSE, Survey of Entering Student Engagement, in the fall 2010 semester. These efforts will be used to inform our continuous quality improvement work. Highland's director of institutional research attended each division meeting this fall to introduce the SENSE. Cross-training is an ongoing process. Because of severe funding cuts, the adult education program was forced to close for a period of time this year. This crisis occurred in the middle of the specialists' cross-training that would have allowed us to integrate parts of the adult education intake process with the college credit and non-credit enrollment processes. It is our intent to renew this effort when the program stabilizes. Additionally, we are currently reviewing the training objectives listed in our training plan documents to determine if there are areas that require additional training opportunities. For example, the financial aid process requires a depth of knowledge. The specialists have requested an opportunity for one-on-one training and job shadowing. The Common Intake team will continue pursuing efforts that will allow us to receive and utilize automated reports from our administrative database. Several of the departments involved in the common intake project are working with the director of institutional research to develop departmental dashboards. Combined with data from our satisfaction surveys, the dashboards will help us achieve improved report development and utilization.

Review (09-20-09):

The institution has identified several next steps including 1. Continuing the point of service surveys 2. Implementing the SENSE, Survey of Entering Student Engagement, in the fall 2010 semester. 3. Reviewing the training objectives listed in Highland's training plan 4. Pursuing efforts to utilize automated reports As indicated in this report, should the adult education program stabilize, Highland Community College will pursue their original goal of cross training staff within this area. While the Action Project is coming to an end, the project team has established a mechanism for ongoing collaboration and improvement. By acknowledging the progress made and that this effort is a start of a longer journey, Highland Community College is well positioned for future improvements within the AQIP framework.

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

"Point of Service Real Time Satisfaction Survey" Early in this project, the implementation team acknowledged that alumni satisfaction data used as outcome indicators would only reveal a portion of the information we needed for continuous quality improvement. These

surveys are only distributed to graduates, and alumni are being asked to recall their experiences of two or more years prior to the survey administration. Because of these factors, the implementation team recommended that additional performance indicators and methods of gathering feedback be developed. This fall we began administering real time point of service surveys following the intake and advising processes in an effort to gather and utilize satisfaction data more rapidly for continuous improvement of our intake system. The surveys are completed on hand-held survey devices and the data is downloaded and analyzed in our institutional research office. We administered these surveys during our high school registration process during which we register high school seniors who will be attending Highland in the summer or fall semester. This year we conducted a pilot to compare the registration processes that occur on our campus against the registration conducted at off-site locations. The data showed very little difference in student satisfaction, however, the off-site responses were slightly more positive overall. More questions need to be asked to determine what factors influenced this trend. For now, the data is providing a catalyst for discussion among the advising team members. During our late registration process, we also administered the surveys on campus. We have collected enough surveys to report on aggregate results from our intake process survey. The majority of the students completing the survey (66%) were registering for classes or making changes to their schedule. Responses to all but one of the service areas achieved 97% satisfaction (agree or strongly agree that they were satisfied). We are very pleased with our process to collect real time point of service satisfaction data using the hand held survey devices.

Review (09-20-09):

The institution is to be commended for acknowledging the limitations of the alumni data and implementing the point of service real time satisfaction survey. Hand-held survey devices are utilized to collect information at the time of the service – allowing the institution to make continual changes to improve service. Highland Community College’s culture of continual improvement is evident and is consistent with AQIP’s Measuring Effectiveness Category (Category 7). The institution should consider sharing their real-time data collection process with other institutions through the HLC Conference or other avenues. Many institutions could benefit from learning Highland Community College’s approach to collecting, analyzing, and taking action on data collected in this manner. While it may be too early to measure, Highland Community College is encouraged to collect data and compare the results with their initial goal of “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.” The project team is dedicated to understanding project progress and strives to reach their goals. The College collected feedback on the high school registration and late registration processes and utilized the information to facilitate a discussion on their project’s progress. This process of collecting, analyzing and reporting data will continue to facilitate this project and future projects.

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

There is somewhat of a challenge with student communication and orientation messaging. We need to be able to communicate more reliably with students to remind or encourage them to get needed student advising as well as to take advantage of other non-classroom learning opportunities. While many low-budget improvements can be made, the College is investigating additional technological

solutions. We are looking at the cost and benefits of upgrading our early alert and recruitment databases from Excel to a tool with additional functionality. This fall a team of staff and faculty will consider the benefits and barriers to utilizing College Email as the primary communication vehicle with students.

Review (09-20-09):

The college recognizes that this project is just one piece of a larger process of improving the institution. In this report, the project team has identified the need to examine communication strategies for researching students, an evaluation of the current early alert system, and the potential replacement of the student recruitment database. As with the other activities, the college demonstrates valuing people (AQIP Category 5) by working carefully with the campus to understand the underlying issues. The problem solving process by working with various campus constituencies, collecting and evaluating data, and making data-driven decisions is at the core of the AQIP process.

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?

Not at this time.

Review (09-20-09):

The institution did not request of AQIP assistance. Should the institution find the need for additional assistance; they are encouraged to contact AQIP. 9777