

Highland Community College, IL

Project: Redesign of Pivotal Transitional English Course (COMM 090)

Declaration

Q: Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

A: The project requires the institution to reexamine HCC's transitional writing curriculum and make course corrections to ensure the transitional courses are properly aligned with the college-level courses. The project will focus largely on redesigning HCC's highest level transitional writing course (COMM 090) and exploring alternative delivery formats such as Alternative Learning Programs (ALP) and co-requisite models. Since transitional writing and reading are so closely tied, the transitional reading sequence will also be reexamined. Ultimately, the project will examine the curriculum alignment of all English composition classes at HCC to determine how well each course supports the next.

Q: Describe your institution's reasons for initiating this action project now and how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution's current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution's recent or soon-to-be submitted Systems Portfolio.

A: This project is relatively urgent for Highland. The previous course alignment for transitional writing was done over ten years ago, and preliminary quantitative and qualitative data suggests a need for revision. Best practices in transitional writing and reading have been evolving rapidly in past years. New and innovative course structures and teaching practices have come to the attention of Highland's transitional writing and reading faculty, and the decision was made to attempt to implement an updated and improved transitional writing and reading curriculum.

Roughly 31% of Highland's students are served by transitional education classes, so improving the quality of transitional writing and reading will more aptly prepare students for college-level courses institution-wide. Further, improving transitional writing and reading by including the use of accelerated programming, co-requisite coursework, and

supplemental instruction could potentially allow students to use less financial aid and reduce the time spent on transitional courses. This would allow students to focus their resources on taking college level classes. This project will strengthen the institution's focus on appropriate placement, pacing, and retention in transitional and college-level courses. Finally, sending better-prepared students to college-level classes will enhance the institution's academic integrity by ensuring students are well-prepared for college level coursework.

This project is an extension of the transitional math action project that began two years ago. It is also directly tied to Highland's strategic initiative to improve transitional education and, thus, improve retention and completion rates among these high-risk students. It is anticipated that the first phase of this project will take three years. Phase two will involve curriculum alignment with Highland's in-district high schools.

Q: List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress toward each goal. Be sure to include when you anticipate submitting the project for formal reviews.

A: The overall goal for this project is to update course curricula and content and realign courses so each transitional course better prepares students for the subsequent class.

The following courses will be addressed for content, best practices, and alignment:

- COMM 084, Basic Written Communication- HCC's low est-level transitional writing course
- COMM 087, Writer's Workshop- 1-credit addendum course that focuses on grammar and mechanical excellence
- COMM 090, Preface to Rhetoric- HCC's highest-level transitional writing course
- COMM 095, Basic Composition-Focuses on continued work in basic composition skills
- RDG 082, Basic College Reading- HCC's low est-level transitional reading course
- RDG 083, College Reading Foundations- Focuses on pre-college level reading strategies
- RDG 120, College Reading Strategies- Focuses on college level reading strategies

Ultimately, the project will examine the curriculum alignment of all English composition classes at HCC to determine how well each course supports the next. Specific data collection and analysis will be built into the project to ensure the college has appropriate feedback regarding the changes.

The project will involve the English faculty, student advisors, the Director of Learning and Transitional Education Services, the Director of the Math Achievement Center, the Director of Institutional Research, the Dean of the Humanities/Social Science/ and Fine Arts Division, the Executive Vice President, and other faculty and student services representatives. As it unfolds, it is anticipated that the project will impact the placement process, class scheduling, and student support services. The key concentration areas will be:

- * Re-designing COMM 090 (including course content/curriculum, course design, etc.)
- * Considering the transitional course ladder and making adjustments (COMM 084, 087, 090 and 095)
- * Piloting a variety of delivery methods (including accelerated learning, 8 week, hybrid/online, etc.)
- * Integrating reading and writing (at transitional level and a college-level "college prep" course)
- * Addressing ESL accessibility and training
- * Rethinking learning spaces affiliated with transitional learning (more lab space, better equipped classrooms, learning commons areas, etc.)

The basic timeline for the project is as follows:

Strategy Forum, February 2016	Creation of Action Project Charter
March 2016	Meet with English Faculty to finalize the Action Project Charter
April 2016	Convene Action Project Team
April/May 2016	Identify models to be reviewed
April/May 2016	Collect Student Feedback
September 2016	Convene Advisory Panel to review feedback and offer additional suggestions
	regarding metrics, strategies, etc.
October 2016	Select instructional model(s) for implementation
Spring 2017	Pilot 1-2 instructional models
Spring 2017	Collect Student and Faculty Feedback
May 2017	Evaluate pilot (Done by Action Project Team and Advisory Council); Identify student support services that are needed to yield student success
Summer 2017	Provide Faculty Development deemed necessary to successfully implement selected instructional models
Fall 2017 offerings	Phase II of Pilot- Expand selected instructional model

transitional courses with	Redesign transitional reading and writing ladder; Align
services as deemed necessary	the first transfer English course, ENGL 121; Expand student
	to support student success
December 2017	Collect Student and Faculty Feedback
Spring 2018 retention and completion	Evaluate curriculum redesign, student success, and student
Spring 2018 with in-district high schools	Create Phase II of project to include curriculum alignment w
	and integration of reading and w riting courses
Summer 2018 implement selected	Provide Faculty Development deemed necessary to fully
	instructional models
Fall 2018 services on a broad scale	Implement curriculum redesign and affiliated student support
Fall 2018	Collect Student and Faculty Feedback
March 2019 retention and completion;	Evaluate curriculum redesign, student success, and student

Roll-out Phase II of project

Metrics for determining whether or not the project objectives have been met will include: the percentage of students successfully completing the transitional reading and/or writing course(s) with a "C" or better, the percentage of students successfully completing the first transfer level writing class (ENGL 121) with a "C" or better, the percentage of students who begin in a transitional writing and/or reading course who go on to complete a certificate or degree, the number and variety of transitional courses offered, student satisfaction/feedback, Full time and Part time instructor satisfaction/feedback, and National Community College Benchmark Project improvement in percentile rank. Student success, satisfaction, and feedback will be gathered each fall and spring semester for the duration of the project. FT/PT instructor satisfaction/feedback will also be gathered each semester for the duration of the project. Course offerings will be compiled each semester. Once collected, the data will be reviewed by the Action Project Committee at least once each fall and spring semester so that the curriculum and course offerings can be refined to ensure continued success and/or identify when additional changes are needed. The student and faculty feedback will help the committee identify additional student support services that may be necessary to aid student learning and success.

Q: Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project's duration.

A: Students will be directly involved in this project. Those enrolled in a transitional writing and/or reading course will be asked to provide feedback in the form of anonymous surveys and focus groups at different stages of the course so that modifications can be made to improve students' learning and engagement. This will be done each semester for the duration of the project. In addition to student feedback, FT and PT instructors will be asked to provide feedback each semester for the duration of the project. Student and instructor feedback will be reviewed along with the other data by the Action Project Team and the Advisory Group. The Action Project Team will be directly involved in reviewing the transitional curriculum, identifying instructional models to pilot, implementing and evaluating the identified instructional models. The Advisory Group will include other key stakeholders who will review the project from a student development perspective. The inclusion of these varied groups will ensure that the project is comprehensive, realistic, and consequential.

Q: Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

A: The progress/success of this project will be monitored throughout the project by tracking the students who place into transitional writing and/or reading courses. Each fall the students who place into these transitional courses will become a Cohort for the purpose of tracking. At the end of each semester, their progress will be checked by looking at the following: the percentage of students successfully completing the transitional reading and/or writing course(s) with a "C" or better, the percentage of students successfully completing the first transfer level writing class (ENGL 121) with a "C" or better, the percentage of students who begin in a transitional writing and/or reading course who go on to complete a certificate or degree. These students will be tracked for three years to see where their success and persistence is most at risk and whether improvement is being made with the progress of future cohorts of students. Once these trends are analyzed, strategies will be identified to address these factors. Another monitoring measure will be the National Community College Benchmark Project data. These data will indicate whether or not improvement has been made in Highland's percentile rank regarding student success, retention, and completion. This data is provided on an annual basis. Another aspect of the project that will be monitored is student satisfaction/feedback. It will be evaluated to determine if satisfaction in the courses offered, preparation levels, and student engagement are improving. Additionally, faculty satisfaction/feedback will be monitored to determine if faculty perceptions regarding curriculum alignment, student engagement, and course structure are improving.

Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project's goals.

A: Since the transitional reading and writing courses have not been re-evaluated for several years, considering, adopting, and adapting to new instructional methods and program design will be the most challenging aspect of this project. It will involve a cultural shift which is often difficult to predict and influence. When communicating this redesign with our campus community additional focus and attention will need to be given to our student advisors, as their identification of courses best suited for individual students is integral to student success.

Provide any additional information that the institution wishes reviewers to understand regarding this Action Project.

A: This project is modeled after Highland's "Developing a Comprehensive Transitional (Developmental) Math Studies Program." This has been internally identified as one of the most successful action projects the institution has undertaken, partially due to the inclusive, cross-campus team that worked on it. Thus, the Action Project Team for this initiative will also be an inclusive, cross-campus team that, hopefully, will offer constructive feedback and suggestions for the successful completion of the project. Although this project will not be costly in terms of money, it will require a strong commitment of time and energy, particularly on the part of the English faculty. The potential impact it will have on student success, retention, and completion is critical not only for students, but for the future of the institution. Because it is becoming more and more difficult to recruit students and grow enrollment in traditional ways, retaining the students who do enroll becomes even more crucial to institutional sustainability.