
Action Project

Institution: Highland Community College
Submitted: 2006-11-03 **Contact:** Jeff Davidson
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Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 11-03-2006

Target completion date: 00-00-0000

Actual completion date: --

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

Placement Score Study to Improve Retention

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

The goal of this project is to analyze placement test scores and course grades in science lab courses to determine whether there is a significant relationship between placement test scores and course grades and the extent to which the placement test scores might predict grades. (Action Project Modifications Originally, the project goal was to analyze placement test scores and course grades in math and science courses. However, it was decided to focus solely on the relationship between placement test scores and course grades in the sciences; it was decided to drop math courses from the analyses. In addition, new deadlines accompany the milestones included on the timeline. Changes due to medical leave of IR Director.)

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

Primary Category: Measuring Effectiveness

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:

This project seeks to build on work previously done in developing a data driven culture. The Humanities/Social Sciences Division in April 2006 piloted a project that collected data from test scores, test dates, and grades for students enrolled in introductory social

science courses for a total of seven semesters. A variety of statistical tests were run to determine whether there was a significant relationship between test scores and grades and the extent to which test scores might predict grades. This information can be used to help advisors place and retain students. The intent of this project is to apply what was learned in the April 2006 pilot to courses in the math and lab sciences areas. A study of skill levels in transfer level courses as they impact student success has implications for both academics and student services. Students with high skills and poor performance need interventions from faculty and student services. If evidence points to requisite skill levels for success in identified courses, pre-requisites may need to be established. The relationship between skill development and success in post-secondary education will need to be a training issue for academic advising. It is our plan to incorporate what we learn in a retention model such as that developed by Fred Lillibridge at Dona Ana Community College using a system designed by Peter Ewell (Ewell, Peter T et al. Establishing a Longitudinal Tracking System. NCHEMS, Boulder, CO.) We want to address retention issues for students whose failure or lack of success is not explained by low skill levels.

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

Natural Sciences and Humanities/Social Sciences faculty, the Learning Assistance Center and Academic Advising in addition to the Common Intake Task Force, a group working on a concurrent AQIP project.

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

The results will be communicated to faculty and academic advising and that the information will be used to identify appropriate prerequisites and student preparation requirements. Processes affected: Retention Academic Advising Teaching and Learning

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

A pilot has already provided considerable information on what works and what doesn't. The faculty who were involved were enthusiastic about the process and so we believe that one year is adequate to complete the project and implement what we learn. We also believe that a shorter time period helps keep the participants focused and on task. We also intend to build on data collected during the pilot. The results will be presented to the faculty at division meetings and other suitable forums. Faculty and staff will be engaged throughout the project in identifying areas needing improvement.

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

The project leader will receive regular reports from the committees and taskforces charged with implementation of each phase of the pilot.

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:

1. Completion of data analysis by September 2007
2. Meet with faculty to discuss the results of the study and any implications for prerequisites by October 2007.
3. If needed, submit any prerequisite modifications to curriculum and instruction committee by November 2007.
4. Provide training for advisors or modify advising processes as determined by the results of the study by December

2007. 5. Integrate the information from this study in the development of a retention model by February 2008. 6. Establish benchmarks to determine impact of data project and resulting strategies on student retention by April 2008.

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

None.

K. Project Leader and contact person:

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Annual Update: 2007-09-07

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

Project members have met with each other and with natural sciences faculty to discuss the research design and which science courses to analyze given the study's purpose. Six courses were chosen for inclusion. In addition to the placement test scores, a set of student characteristics were discussed. Although analyzing the relationship between these student characteristics and course grades was not included in the original project description, they are of interest and may be analyzed descriptively, post-hoc, to the extent possible. Capitalizing on a pilot project similar in nature, code to extract data from the college's student information system was modified and run. The process for cleaning these data for analysis was then documented utilizing the extracted data for one course. Data cleaning for the remaining five courses will follow the same process and then regression analyses for each course will be conducted. Given competing college priorities and due to the maternity leave of the institutional researcher, this study has not progressed as quickly as planned. However, the initial timeline developed has not been wholly compromised in that the results of the study and communication of these results will be carried out by the original planned completion date of November 2007.

Review (11-08-07):

The project is ambitious but a little slow, particularly the planned regression analysis portions. Perhaps it would be better to accomplish something measurable and then retire the project into a more accomplishable format. It has great applications to the AQIP Principles of Focus and Information, and the AQIP Category of Supporting Institutional Operations.

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

As noted in response (A), input from natural science faculty was solicited and used provide direction for this action project. All faculty

and staff were informed of the study and given a project update at mandatory all-staff meetings that took place in January and August, respectively. Face-to-face meetings and e-mail have been the primary modes of communication between project team members.

Review (11-08-07):

Is there a way you can accelerate communication? That process itself can be part of the AQIP spirit of improved Leading and Communicating, even though it's not imbedded in the original project declaration.

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

Data extraction and analysis will be completed by the data analyst and institutional researcher in September and the results of the study will be disseminated to faculty and staff in October. The feedback and suggestions received as a result of this dissemination will then be compiled, considered, and used by project team members to make any appropriate revisions to course prerequisites and to help develop a retention model.

Review (11-08-07):

Your technicians can do wonderful work with this, which is the expedient way of getting things done, but be sure you're still involving people on as wide-spread a basis as you can. AQIP is about process improvement and people, so perhaps you can increase your face-to-face communication rather than handing the statistical analysis to your technicians to complete.

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

None as of this point.

Review (11-08-07):

Even if your effective practices take the form of bruises and scratches, you have probably learned some through this project.

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

One sticking point will be figuring how to use student mathematics placement scores in the regression analyses. Due to the way in which the mathematics placement tests are administered, a student may receive more than one mathematics placement score. This is unlike the administration of the reading placement test, where a student will take only one test and receive only one score.

Review (11-08-07):

This section is a little too focused upon the measurements of the project and not enough on the benefits and final results, like what's in it for students. Again, perhaps you can have a face-to-face conversation that will refocus the project on learning and institutional improvements rather than the statistical paperwork.

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 do not believe that we need assistance from AQIP for this project at this point in time.

Review (11-08-07):