
Action Project

Institution: Highland Community College
Submitted: 2006-10-13 **Contact:** Jeff Davidson
Email: jeff.davidson@highland.edu **Telephone:** 815-599-3417

Timeline:

Planned project kickoff date: 10-30-2006

Target completion date: 10-30-2008

Actual completion date: --

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

Employee Leadership Institute

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

The goal of this project is to provide leadership training for employees and to help support their professional and personal growth.

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

Primary Category: Valuing People

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: _

One of the college's initial action projects that will soon be formally retired is "Employee Enhancement and Development." In a recent AQIP steering committee meeting, several AQIP category teams identified a need to address leadership training for employees that would be difficult to implement without additional staff and funding. The college also wishes to enhance leadership training (including decision-making, conflict resolution, and teambuilding) throughout the organization. The hope is that this training will cause increased involvement and participation by all employee groups in college governance. An AQIP reviewer suggested we infuse the project into the college infrastructure, thereby creating more likelihood for buy-in and participation. A reasonable way to do this would be to offer leadership training to employees, regardless of rank or length of tenure. HCC has supported a tremendously

successful program in leadership training for local business and professional people for nearly fifteen years. Our plan is to borrow curricula and programmatic materials from our HCC Leadership Institute and offer the leadership training to employees beginning in fall 2007 and in spring 2008. Recent graduates of the Leadership Institute could serve as instructors in such a program.

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

Potentially all employees at the college, regardless of their job classification or length of employment including faculty, classified, custodial and maintenance, and administrative staff, and in all cases, both full or part-time employees.

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

This project has the potential to affect all college processes but in particular institutional governance and processes requiring teamwork.

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

We plan to form a representative committee to oversee this project. Planning will take place in late fall 2006 and spring 2007, with significant emphasis placed on gathering input from recent alumni of Leadership Institute, committee members from the Employee Enhancement and Development AQIP action project, and the college-community at large. Implementation of employee leadership training, with ongoing assessment scheduled throughout the life of the project, is scheduled for fall 2007 and spring 2008. Assessment will be completed by the fall 2008.

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

We plan to monitor employee participation and satisfaction with the project on a continuous basis. This will be done with surveys, focus group meetings, and other methods yet to be determined.

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:

We anticipate that employees who complete this program will be more satisfied with their work, do their jobs better, and ultimately improve our institution. This program also has the potential to contribute to an individual's personal growth, improving family and community organizations. Assessment of the program and an evaluation of institutional growth will help us determine whether our employee leadership training was effective. One measure of success may be the degree to which the program is infused at all levels and layers of the college, ie. broad employee involvement by all employee groups.

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

The college believes that this project will promote within the organization the AQIP Quality Criteria of Valuing People, Leading and Communication, and Building Collaborative Relationships

K. Project Leader and contact person:

Contact Name: Thompson Brandt, Associate Dean, Humanities & Social Scie

Email: Thompson.Brandt@highland.
Phone: 815-599-3450 Ext.

Annual Update: 2007-08-21

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

The employee leadership steering committee met five times between November 2006 and May 2007. In a meeting in December, a survey was developed to gather information about what employees expected of this program. The survey was administered college-wide in January and results were analyzed in February. Throughout the remainder of spring semester the program was designed using these results as a guide. Two “supervisor meetings” were scheduled as well. These meetings provided the steering committee important information about scheduling the program and ensuring that prospective participants would be supported by their supervisors. In addition, formal review and acceptance of a draft of the program syllabus was completed in meetings of the College Cabinet and among supervisors. The College President and Leadership Team offered uncompromising support in each phase of planning and developing the program. An application for participation in the program was designed and made available to all college personnel in April. A written invitation to apply and participate in employee leadership training was sent to all college personnel in May by the President. A final class list of fifteen participants was finalized in July. The program will be launched in fall semester 2007, from September to November.

Review (08-23-07):

A. You have shown a very positive commitment for success of this project by holding five meetings throughout the year and achieving major support of the program from top management which connects with Category 5, Leading and Communicating. Your approach to providing the ability for participation in the program to all personnel (Category 4, Valuing People) demonstrates your commitment for developing employees at all levels.

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

We were easily able to motivate and communicate with steering committee members. The co-chairs carefully considered those who had already taken part in our Leadership Institute program and asked them to join the steering committee. As a result, “buy-in” was firmly established from the beginning. Communication flowed among members using email, telephone, and personal connections. We maintained general awareness of the importance and progress of the Project with a brief overview of the program in a presentation to the campus in January 2007 and throughout the rest of the semester in meetings, through email contact, and personal interaction.

Those working on the project remained active and motivated throughout the plenary period because their interest and experience in leadership programs at Highland in the past inspired them to serve and share. College-wide motivation began in fall 2006 when the entire college brainstormed future action projects and the leadership project came to the front. In spring 2007 the developing project was presented to college community at an opening days meeting. The college's president promoted participation in the leadership program at communication meetings and at opening days meetings.

Review (08-23-07):

B. Your program to communicate to everyone using the various tools available is a very positive approach. People respond to different communication methods and it appears that you have addressed these needs. The quality gurus tell us that quality improvement starts at the top and it is very positive to see that your college president was active in promoting participation. Did the steering committee members have prepared checklists to use when discussing the project with prospective participants?

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

We are planning to move the Action Project ahead by offering the first semester of the program in fall 2007, assessing its success by surveying the instructors and fifteen participants, and continuing to be in contact with steering committee members and supervisors. We hope to begin recruiting participants in August 2007 for the spring 2008 class.

Review (08-23-07):

C. You state that a survey of the instructors and 15 participants will be used to assess the success of the programs. This is a very good method of measuring effectiveness of a process. How often do you plan to do this? Since this is a new program, you might want to poll the participants after each session in order to help identify areas for modification.

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

Suffice it to say that our highly successful Leadership Institute Program has provided us a magnificent model from which to work. The practice we are finding most effective in implementing this Action Project is that we have been clear with our objective, open to input from all college employees, careful in moving forward at a reasonable pace, cognizant of the importance of developing "buy-in" at all levels (especially in the steering committee) through a flow of communication, aware of the importance of working together and staying active, and confident that the first "installment" of this program will help us pave the way for even more effective offerings of employee leadership training in the future. We'd be open to your invitation to share these practices and processes at your next Annual Meeting.

Review (08-23-07):

D. As more people participate and the benefits blossom, it would be interesting to monitor what percentage of the total college population wants to participate in the program. This project may indeed be of interest at the HLC Annual Meeting. After you refine

your processes and document outcomes you should consider submitting a proposal to present in the future.

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

Although we'd welcome actionable feedback and advice from your review process, we've encountered few (if any) blocks, gaps, sticking points, or problems. Nevertheless, it is fair to say here that in spite of moving slowly and surely on the planning and designing stage of this Project, the invitation to college personnel to participate in the program was not delivered at the most opportune moment (after Commencement and before summer session). As a result, personal conversations with desirable applicants for the Project were necessary for us to arrive at a well represented class. While this sort of interaction will likely continue to be necessary, in future semesters we anticipate far better ease in assembling each class because we'll have a semester's worth of time to solicit and consider applications.

Review (08-23-07):

E. You are off to a great start! As the first session progresses, monitoring of the program will help identify opportunities for programs improvement (potential modification). Be sure to keep the Commission in formed of your success stories.

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?

At this point, we don't think it is necessary to talk to AQIP about getting further suggestions about how to make the development and implementation of this Action Project better. However, we'd be pleased to respond if you think it would be appropriate.

Review (08-23-07):

F. Good Luck.